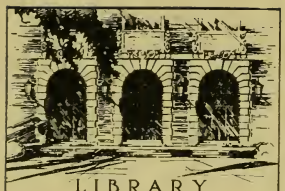

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Mary Ann S. Hamilton

Bianca! Tazio - thou hast seen Alda =
lella!.
Tazio! Well, she is no basilisk - there's no
death in her eyes..
Bianca! Ay Tazio, but there is, - a more
than death - a death beyond the grave - a
death of sin, a howling hideous & eternal
death -
Death, the flesh shrinks from - No thou
must not see her - Nay I'm imperative
thou'rt mine & shalt not — —
Take heed, we're passionate, our milk
of love -
Doth turn to worm wood & that's bitter
drinking.
If that ye cast us to the winds, the winds
Will give us their unruly restless nature
We whirl & whirl — & where we settle
Tazio -
But He who ruleth the mad winds
can know —

If ye do drive the love out of my soul-
That is its motion, being & its life
There 'll be a conflict strange &
horrible
among all fearful & ill visaged fiends
For the blank void - & their mad
revel there -
Will make me - oh! I know not what
— Hate thee! —

Maryanna Hamilton.

MRS. GREVILLE,

THE STORY OF A WOMAN'S LIFE

TOLD BY

URSULA,

A SOMEWHILE SISTER OF MERCY.

"Ask what is human life? . . . .
A painful passage o'er a restless flood,
A vain pursuit of fugitive false good,
A scene of fancied bliss and heart-felt care."

COWPER.

"Mon avis est qu'on ne peut créer des personnages que lorsque l'on a beaucoup étudié les hommes, comme on ne peut parler une langue qu'a la condition de l'avoir sérieusement apprise. Ainsi je me contente de raconter."—DUMAS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1874.

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MRS. GREVILLE.

CHAPTER I.

"Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee, from this, for ever!"

KING LEAR.

THE country—a lovely summer's day—hot still, and heavy with the perfume of lime blossoms—insects humming lazily in the sunshine—bees indulging too deeply in the treacherous lime-cup, and lying helplessly beneath the trees—birds singing in the fulness of joy—swift swallows darting down from their soaring flight on some unwary fly, and again winging their heavenward way—gorgeous-hued emperors sailing slowly past in all the dignity of imperial solitude, scarcely as

happy as their coquettish white kinsmen who, dallying and toying in couples, chase each other in the glad sunshine.

Thus without under nature's canopy.

Within—beneath the roof of a large, Gothic building—sat, unmindful of the joyous summer's dalliance, a man, who, judging from his attitude, was sunk in dejection. His arms were crossed on the table before him, and his gray head buried within them, while in one hand was clenched a crumpled letter.

Windows wide open and reaching to the ground, let in floods of sunshine and warm fragrant air ; but they were lost on the occupant of the room.

A quick, elastic step was unheard on the sward, as a youth, barely two-and-twenty, approached the window, where he paused for a moment and then stepped in unperceived.

" Father," said he, finding himself unnoticed.

At the sound of his voice the other started up, furiously, his old and withered face blanching with anger.

" You here ?" cried he. " *You ?* How dare you show your face here ? You received my letter ?"

"I have," replied the other, in tones almost feminine in their sweet, loving cadence, "and it is because of that letter that I am here to-day. You wrote in anger, father, but I feel that such anger cannot last. See, you have been reading my letter," pointing to the crumpled paper the other still held. "I will not believe that the cruel words you wrote were really meant. I have come to ask your forgiveness—*she* would have come also, but that I would not let her."

The old man sank wearily into his former attitude, uttering no word.

"Father! speak to me—say you forgive us;" and the youth bent his knee at his father's side.

"Forgive you!" said he, wheeling back his chair, and glancing with fury on his son, "never! My affections were centred in you—you have outraged them. My hopes rested in you—you have destroyed them. My word was pledged for you—you have compelled me to break it. Begone! If ever you venture to cross my threshold again, it will be at your own peril, for my servants shall drive you forth like a hound!"

Stung to madness, the youth sprang to his feet and faced the speaker, his countenance scarcely less furious than his father's.

"Begone!" reiterated his father, "and my curse go with you. Cursed be the jade you call wife, and cursed be the children she bears you! Go! Depart from my sight for ever! You are no son of mine from this day forth!"

The boy's winsome face was distorted with passion. They bore a marvellous resemblance to each other—these two—father and son—as they stood glaring murderously into each other's eyes.

"Unsay that about my wife!" hissed Philip, threateningly, as with hands clenched and teeth set he drew nearer to the old man, till their faces nearly met.

"Ha! that touches you, does it?" said the other, fiendishly.

"May the miserable jade—the—" The word was unspoken.

Mad with passion the boy sprang at his father's throat, and in the hundredth part of another second would have throttled him; but even as he sprang, his eye caught the face of his fair, young mother on the wall before

him, and the soft sweet eyes seemed endowed with life as they looked sadly down on her boy. He stopped with a sharp cry, like one shot through the heart. For a moment he covered his face with his hands, and then rushed from the house which so nearly had witnessed the fellest of all crimes.

Stern and merciless was the old man's face, as he watched his son's rapidly vanishing form down the avenue, until it was out of sight, and then he sank down in his chair, shutting all outward things from view. And still the sun shone bravely into the room—still the birds twittered merrily from twig to twig—still the lark poised mid-air, carolling forth her grateful hymn to heaven—still the sportive butterflies coquetted in the sunbeams—still the drunken bees lay helplessly beneath the limes—still the blossoms wafted their perfumed breath, warm and sweet, through the summer air—all was still unchanged without—love, peace, beauty, and harmony reigned throughout nature; while within that room had crept hate, malice, and fury—and murder had only been saved by a miracle.

Alas! as ever since the fall of Paradise, so

now, did sin and sorrow come of woman; but also as before, as salvation came through woman, so now, through woman—a mother—came that influence which saved a man from parricide.

Do the spirits of the dead ever keep watch over their loved ones on earth?

One could almost think so—sometimes.

Nor was it strange that Philip Gaveston, wildly rushing from temptation, should feel that it was his mother's spirit hovering over him which had saved him from an awful crime.

He paused not till he reached the lodge gates, when, springing into a trap that waited him, he drove rapidly back to the town.

In those days a journey from Yorkshire to London was a longer affair than now, and long ere he reached the metropolis, young Gaveston, with his usual impetuosity, had decided on his course of action; namely, that of exchanging from the Guards into a regiment bound for India.

His father had disowned him—disinherited him. So be it. He would make his own way, and never as long as he lived would he

accept the smallest dole at the hands of that father!

"Not I!" cried he, one day, after some such discussion in the mess-room; "not I. He has cursed not only me, but others. Let the curse fall on himself!"

Gaveston's temper was getting the better of him, when a gentlemanly man, somewhat his senior, stepping forward, linked his arm in his, saying,—

"I am just off to the Horse Guards to hear when our regiment sails; come with me, Phil."

And so Captain Greville drew him away, and gradually calmed down the frenzy that overpowered Philip whenever his father's name was mentioned in his hearing.

The prospect of active service was most congenial to a man in his state of mind, and during the fortnight that intervened before the regiment embarked, there was little leisure for dwelling on the quarrel with his father.

At two-and-twenty, one is careless of the future. It is such a long way off! Besides, was he not full of life, and health, and but

just married to a lovely girl, who worshipped him with all the ardour of her Italian nature! And his father would fain have linked him to a vulgar, red-headed cotton-spinner!

Some such thought crossed him as, leaning over the ship's side—they were far on their way to India—his eyes rested lovingly on the beautiful, high-bred girl who stood beside him.

"And besides, *caro mio*," said she, continuing their conversation, "suppose your brother married and had children."

"By Jove, that's true!" exclaimed Philip; "but you see, Teresa, it has never occurred to any one that poor Gaveston would marry. He is very sickly, and—and deformed, and—and——" hesitated Philip, shrinking from putting into plain words the belief which every one entertained, that the invalid could not live—"in fact my father has always looked to me as the heir; but by Jove! what a sell if Gaveston marries!"

"And if he does?" asked the Italian, lifting her glorious black eyes to her husband's face.

"If he have a son, carina," replied he,

taking the cigar from his lips to kiss the upturned face, "you will never be Countess of Pierrepoint; only a poor soldier's wife."

We need not record the loving answer nor the subsequent conversation that flowed softly on beneath the silvery light of the sea-born moon. It has nothing to do with our story: they were young, happy, and in love: was anything more wanting to make this world a Paradise to them?

Lord Pierrepoint did not rally as his son had done; but then he was not twenty-two, and in love, with a soldier's career before him. Somewhat late in life, and still unmarried, he had succeeded to estates which, large as they were, were heavily mortgaged. The next heir to the title was a distant cousin, with whom Lord Pierrepoint was on very bad terms; and matters had not been mended by that cousin remonstrating at the reckless way in which Lord Pierrepoint was ruining the estate by cutting down even the ornamental timber.

This remonstrance had the effect of putting him in a towering passion, and of making him turn his thoughts to matrimony, and thus for

ever destroy Mr. John Gaveston's audacious hopes; and not long after, the world was informed that Lord Pierrepoint was married to a young girl, penniless, but well-born and beautiful.

She lived for twelve years after their marriage, and bore her husband several children, of whom, however, only the two eldest lived —Lord Gaveston and Philip.

Nature, so capricious in her gifts, had been as lavish to the latter as she had been niggardly to the former. Whether from disease or some fall in his infancy, no one knew, but the little viscount was a sickly, deformed child, dwarfed in stature, and with never a day's health. Contrary to all expectation, he lived —a peevish, irritable child—acutely sensitive to his infirmity, and shrinking from every one save his mother. She was his haven; for there is

> "In all this cold and hollow world,
> No fount of deep, strong, deathless love,
> Save that within a mother's heart."

And when she died, he was indeed left friendless; for his father hated him, and never forgave him for being the eldest-born, instead

of the comely, frank-hearted Philip—a dislike which had not diminished as year succeeded year, and still the viscount lived while other blooming children were born to him only to fade away and die.

Poor child! his was a hard fate—one of those mysteries none can fathom ; and it was hardly a grief to him when his father, under the plea of a milder climate better suiting his feeble health, banished him to a small estate he had on the iron-bound coast of Cornwall.

Here he lived his lonely life, exaggerating every evil, and encouraging his naturally morbid feelings; shrinking from his fellow-creatures, and resenting almost with ferocity his brother's attempts at a more friendly intercourse ; and thus he dropped out of the family circle ; and save that Philip was still "Master Gaveston," this latter was to all intents and purposes the heir.

While the years dragged slowly on with the eldest son, they sped on joyously with the younger.

An idle scamp enough at Eton, and the hero of many a boyish scrape, he was the most popular boy in his form ; and even his natural

enemies, the masters, had a kindly feeling for the lad, whose honest face and laughing blue eyes were an index to the true, gentlemanly character that lay beneath the comely exterior.

He carried his popularity with him into the Household Brigade, and if he brought but little classical lore from Eton, he had gained an unrivalled reputation for athletic sports and for being a "thorough good fellow."

His father's estate was, as I said, heavily mortgaged; and one day, after many remonstrances, Lord Pierrepoint's lawyer informed him that he was on the brink of ruin—that Mr. Money, a nobody, but a millionnaire and who had gradually become the mortgagee of the greater part of the estates, had threatened to foreclose.

"If it were not for my boy, he might do it and be d——d!" retorted the earl. "You must stop this, Cookson; find some means. I leave it to you."

Thus authorised, Mr. Cookson went to Manchester, saw Mr. Money, and saw Mr. Money's daughter—an only child—and after some conversation thought he saw the

means. Mr. Money did not aspire to an earldom himself, but had no objection to becoming the grandfather of one. In fact, the idea so tickled him that he was ready to assent to any proposition from Mr. Cookson.

"H'm!" said the earl, laconically, when the lawyer proposed a marriage between Philip and Miss Money as the only means of salvation. "What's the woman like? Presentable?"

"She's not a woman yet; only thirteen."

"God bless my soul! marry at that age?"

"No; not for a year or two," returned the lawyer, who never wasted more time nor words than he could help.

"And the family — what is that like?" asked the other, after a pause.

"No family at all. Father and mother, and this girl. Father, a foundling, as far as I can make out," said the lawyer, drumming with his fingers on the table.

"A nice father-in-law for *my* boy!" quoth the earl, grimly.

"Better than if he had a swarm of vulgar relations," retorted the other, dryly. "Look here, my lord," he continued, seeing how the

earl hesitated; "just look at things as they are. There is not an acre you can fairly call your own—a threatened foreclosure is on one hand—on the other, a young woman with a million of money ready to come forward and redeem the whole. You object to her pedigree, or rather the want of one," he continued, with grim wit, "and you think that Mr. Philip might find an equally rich wife in his own sphere. Heiresses are rare in the nobility; but even if you found one, do you think that any father would give such a daughter—a prize for a duke—to the second son—a boy—a child—of a ruined earl? And remember, my lord," he added, significantly—"remember, Mr. Philip is *not* the eldest son."

Lord Pierrepoint checked the words that rose to his lips, and began pacing the room in silence.

The conversation continued some time, but the upshot was that a very courteous invitation to Gaveston Abbey was sent to Mr. Money, his wife, and daughter.

The visit was uncomfortable enough, though Philip, a bright, handsome boy about eighteen,

and all unconscious of the honour in store for him, charmed Mr. Money.

After the guests had departed, Philip informed his father that they were "a rum lot," whereupon the Earl of Pierrepoint deemed it expedient to postpone his communication to a more convenient season. When it was made, Philip laughed with the *insouciance* of youth that has never been thwarted, for events in the far future, and simply saying, "What, that rum girl with the red hair? Lord bless us!" went back to Windsor to join his regiment, and forgot an affair which he had regarded in the light of a joke.

Not so his father; but as the time was still distant, and as Miss Money was to be sent to a Parisian school to be fitted for the position of the future Countess of Pierrepoint, he deemed it better to be silent for the present, and see what the effect on his son would be, when his future bride, properly finished, dressed, and trained, should appear before him.

Meanwhile, and shortly before Miss Money was to be returned to her relations—finished

—Philip had taken a trip to Italy, where he fell in love with a lovely, high-born young Italian, married her then and there, in opposition to her own family, who, rigid Roman Catholics, were furious at her entering a heretic family.

Philip, certain of a welcome from the father who had never yet opposed his wishes, brought home his penniless bride, with what results we know.

CHAPTER II.

"He brings Earl Ormond to receive my vows!
O dreadful change! For Tancred, haughty Ormond."
TANCRED AND SIGISMUNDA.

"Lord, we know what we are, but we
Know not what we may be."
HAMLET.

THE interview with Mr. Money was not a pleasant one, but Mr. Cookson smoothed matters over, and it was settled that the old agreement should hold good—only—Lord Gaveston's name was to be inserted instead of Philip's. The change was hardly fair, but as Mr. Cookson impressed on the merchant, the viscount might marry and have children; and if so, there would have been an end to his ambitious hopes for his daughter had she married Philip.

To his infinite surprise, Lord Gaveston was

summoned home; and soon after, the marriage was solemnized with much pomp and magnificence. A bitter satire on the whole affair.

In due time two sons were born to them, weakly children, it is true, but they might have grown stronger had less care been bestowed on them; but what with doctors, and experienced nurses, and their grandfather's incessant vigilance, they bid fair to be killed by kindness.

Meantime Philip was fighting in India, but on hearing of his brother's marriage, he found time to write him a very friendly letter, giving him at the same time a glowing account of his exciting life, and of his glorious hopes and ambition. A hurried postscript announced the birth of a little daughter.

Once more—when he heard that Lord Gaveston had a son born to him—he wrote again and for the last time, for the final storming of Bhurtpore, which shortly occurred, and which saw the end of the Burmese war, saw also the end of Philip Gaveston's career. He fell, shot through the breast, just two years after he and his young wife had landed

in India. His old friend, Greville, was near him when he fell, and to him he confided his wife and child, and feebly returning the pressure of his hand, his life-blood ebbed away.

As Colonel Greville told off some men to bear the body of the brave young captain to the rear, he felt that he would rather lead a dozen forlorn hopes than carry the fatal tidings to the young wife whose adoration of her husband was proverbial. He was a brave man, but the veriest coward could not have trembled under fire more than he did when he bethought him of the ordeal that awaited him.

He broke the tidings as gently as he could, but such tidings never come gently, and he was glad enough when peace being shortly concluded, he was able to take Mrs. Gaveston and her child to England.

Her wild passion of grief was followed by an apathy from which nothing roused her; she was very gentle, acquiescing in all the arrangements made for her, but never evincing the slightest interest in anything. Her heart seemed dead.

Colonel Greville, on their arrival in London, left her in a quiet hotel, and then waited on Lord Pierrepoint. He was aware of the breach that had existed between father and son, but, like all generous natures, he could not believe that any animosity would survive the grave. He little knew the hard, implacable man he had to deal with.

The earl was then not only the delighted grandfather of one boy, but was further rejoicing over the expectant birth of a second, and if he felt any grief at the untimely death of his once favourite son, he concealed it well, and utterly repudiating all connection with the widow, simply offered to take charge of the child, if she—the mother—would return to her native country with a solemn promise never to hold any communication with her daughter.

Colonel Greville cast back the cruel, insulting offer with such bitter words, that, haughty, arrogant, insolent as was Lord Pierrepoint, he literally shivered as he heard them.

For some moments he had no power to arrest the torrent of scorn and wrath that

was poured forth on him from the soldier's lips. The curse that had driven forth the son to his death, was verily hurled back on the father.

"Go! go!" screamed, this latter, inarticulate with rage, and pointing to the door.

"Yes," replied Greville, "I go; but ere I leave this room, I tell you that as sure as there is justice in Heaven, your cruel, unnatural curse shall fall a hundred-fold on your own head. You are an old man, with one foot already in the grave; but you will live to see Heaven's vengeance recoil on you. It *has* begun. One son is dead—a son of whom you might well be proud—and disgrace is already looming on you and yours!"

"It is false! Go! Out of my house!" screamed the old man, in his weak treble, furiously pulling the bell.

"*It is true*, Lord Pierrepoint," said Greville, as he left the room.

Colonel Greville did not speak idly when he prophesied to Lord Pierrepoint, though it needed but little prescience, for rumour was already rife with Lady Gaveston's name.

Ere a year had passed away, children's

voices had ceased to be heard in the Abbey. Nor money, nor care (perhaps in consequence of them) could keep life in the little sickly frames of the young Gavestons; they pined away, and were laid with much pomp in the family vault.

The viscountess had had a hard time of it. A querulous, captious husband whom she despised, and who disliked her; a stern old father-in-law, of whom she stood in mortal terror, and who allowed her no control over her children, made Lady Gaveston feel that her title had been too dearly purchased. Her time, since the death of her children, had been chiefly spent at her father's house, and one day she left it—but not alone.

Immediate steps were taken for a divorce, and the consequent shame and disgrace—for such had never been known in the annals of the Pierrepoint family, where men were brave and women virtuous—together with his father's anger, so told on Lord Gaveston's health, that he sank beneath the weight and soon followed his children to the grave.

Lord Pierrepoint lingered out the remainder of his life in dreary solitude. Too im-

placable to make any advance to Mrs. Gaveston, and too violent for any one to care to live with him, he died alone and unregretted.

Strangely enough, the very means he had taken to deprive his cousin of the estates, were destined to have a contrary effect; for, on the birth of Lord Gaveston's son, the property had been so strictly re-entailed that the whole went with the title to the next heir—thus does human malice often frustrate itself.

Colonel Greville did not think it necessary to give any details to Mrs. Gaveston of the interview that he had had with her father-in-law.

He knew perfectly well that she would not part with her child, and he also knew that her own family had utterly repudiated her for marrying a heretic. She was, therefore, completely thrown on his hands—a serious charge for a young man not thirty years of age; but he was not one to turn from any responsibility intrusted to him.

His next step was to seek his sister, Mrs.

Dacres, a widow, twenty years older than himself, who lived a very retired life in the South of Wales.

Her heart at once warmed to the poor forlorn stranger and her child, and she readily agreed to take them as inmates.

"The kindness is to me," she replied, in answer to her brother's fear that the charge might weary her; "I am getting old, and solitude begins to grow dull now that my sight fails me. A young child, too, about the place will brighten it once more."

Her lips quivered as she spoke, for in the churchyard hard by stood a tombstone, sacred to the memory of Charles Dacres, aged thirty-two, and his two children, aged five and seven years.

It is true that many, many years had elapsed since that time; but the dead never grow old, and Mrs. Dacres only recalled the husband of her youth, and their little children who had graced a few years of their lives, as she had last seen them.

"God bless you, Mary," said her brother, fervently; "you were ever the best and kindest woman on earth."

And thus were Philip's widow and child provided for.

True to his instincts as a soldier, Greville had first attended to duty; but no sooner was this done, than he hastened to claim the hand of the girl to whom he had been engaged before he had left for India.

He little thought, in the loyalty of his own heart, the blow that awaited him. Communication with India in those days was not so rapid as now. His letter, announcing his return and his accession to fortune, crossed one which reached India after his departure; and when he arrived at his darling's house, with eager hopes and throbbing heart, it was to learn that she was already the wife of another man!

And he had trusted and believed in her, as we always do believe in those we love, and he had lost her! It was a staggering blow, one of those hits that shake a man's faith in woman; so, taking a man's remedy for a sore heart, he packed his portmanteau and gun-case, and went abroad to seek in the excitement and adventures of foreign travel a panacea for his woes.

For twelve years he led a wandering life, chiefly in the other hemisphere, when business recalled him to his own country.

He had long since been cured of his love, but had never again trusted his heart to woman's keeping, and it was with perfect indifference that shortly after his return he met in a gay, fashionable woman of the world his earthly dream of perfect womanhood.

He watched her not only without his pulses beating faster, but with a grim satisfaction that the flippant, rouged woman he was regarding was *not* his wife.

It was at a ball in town. She had not recognised her former lover in the bronzed, bearded man who stood looking at her for some time, with a queer expression of amused wonderment in his face.

"Who *is* that man?" she asked, in a pause of the valse, pointing out Greville, who leant indolently against the wall, caressing his beard as he surveyed the room full of people, many of whom he had known as children, but strangers to him now.

"That's Greville, the famous traveller,"

replied her partner, a young guardsman, who had just joined, and some fifteen years her junior; "he is a mighty hunter, they say; has killed no end of tigers and that sort of thing, you know," and circling her waist they again whirled away.

Greville presently approached her, and begged to be allowed to re-introduce himself. There was not the least trace of pleasure nor bitterness, nor regret in his calm, courteous recognition, a fact which vexed the lady not a little; for though women throw men over—lose all care for them—they never like to feel that their power is at an end.

She took his arm and exerted every effort to captivate him. In vain! the same amused look now and then passed over his face, and with no little pique, the lady left him, replying to a friend, who asked her what she thought of the great Nimrod, "My dear, he is quite odious—a bear!"

"And that," soliloquised Greville, as he walked up Pall Mall, smoking his cigar, "*that* is Caroline Buller, whom I once thought scarce less than angel! Verily, 'we know

what we are, but we not what we may be.' Thy madness, Ophelia, was philosophic."

Hereupon he let himself into his lodgings and went to bed.

Thus ended Colonel Greville's first love.

CHAPTER III.

"O si el dolor que siento se acabara
Y el bien que tanto anhélo se cumpliese!
Como por desdichado que ahore fuése
La mas alta ventura no envidiara!"

MILENDEZ.

"A lovely child she was, of looks serene,
And motions which o'er things indifferent shed
The grace and gentleness from whence they came."

SHELLEY.

THE foregoing twelve years had passed very quietly with the two widowed ladies in the Welsh cottage. Nothing occurred to disturb the even tenour of their way, save that Mrs. Gaveston's health grew gradually weaker, while her religious fervour took a sterner character as she neared the goal of human suffering; for the dear, precious hope of meeting in heaven the beloved ones over whom the grave has closed—that blessed hope which

has led more than one to strive after better things, and which has soothed the bitterest grief—for the heart is of the earth, earthy—was denied to her; for how could she, a devout Roman Catholic, hope to meet a heretic in heaven?

Eternity without *him!* O God! have mercy!

She had but one resource—one desperate hope—to which she clung with all the passion of her nature.

She could pray for, and have masses offered up for his soul—she could inflict penances on herself, how severe none other knew—she could pass her nights in vigils, praying that the heresy of her husband might be forgiven, and that they might meet *at last.*

And her child, *his* child? If only she might dedicate that pure, innocent soul to God, it was possible that it might redeem that other one! But she gave no utterance to this—the yearning of her heart—and conscientiously left the dearest of all tasks—the religious training of her child—to Mrs. Dacres; for before that child had been born, and again on that fatal day which never

brought him back, Mrs. Gaveston had promised her husband that it should be brought up in *his* faith.

She honourably kept her vow, but in order to save her two dear ones, she mortified her tender flesh beyond her powers of endurance; austerities which gradually shortened her life. But what were pain and suffering in comparison with the blessed hope in prospect? So, in the small oratory which she fitted up, prostrated before the crucifix, or bowed down before the shrine of the Mother of Sorrows, the unhappy lady spent the greater part of her life.

In vain did Mrs. Dacres seek to comfort her with the tender, blessed promises of her own faith; any influence which she might have gained was speedily destroyed by the ascetic priest who frequently visited his charge, and to whom Mrs. Gaveston confided half of the income which she received, for masses for Philip's soul.

It may be all wrong, a mistaken faith; but who shall dare to say that such fervour—such terrible struggles—shall count for nought with the Father of all mercies? that the in-

tense, earnest belief of the Roman Catholic shall be cast aside in the great day of judgment?

Well for us that He judges not as man judges, nor sees with human eyes.

The one bright thing in that saddened home was the child, Eveline. Exquisitely lovely was the little girl, and every day she increased in beauty and in the caressing fascination of her sweet, childish ways, winning her way to every heart.

Her loving, gentle temper was one of those that no petting nor indulgence ever spoils; indeed the atmosphere of love that surrounded her, only called into fuller blossom every sweet quality of her grateful, affectionate nature, and developed to an almost dangerous degree her utter unselfishness.

The mystery that to her childish eyes surrounded her mother, gave a touch of awe to the devotion—painful in its intensity—that she felt for her. It was a love too holy to be spoken of; it was an adoration that was shut up in the mysteries of her little heart, but which sometimes showed itself in a pas-

sionate burst of tears as she clasped the suffering mother in her tiny arms, straining her to her bosom with all her childish strength. No one but herself knew the agony that she went through when sometimes her mother's reserve made her imagine she was not beloved in return.

With Mrs. Dacres—"Aunt Mary," as the child called her—she was on equal terms, and it was touching to see the aged lady with her small companion tending the sick and the poor, or keeping in order the graves of Aunt Mary's little children—angels in Heaven—who became Eveline's spirit companions.

It was a very quiet life, but to the child a very happy one—the young need so little to make life joyous to them : affection and tenderness are the sunshine of their little lives ; and without a cloud on hers, Eveline grew into as bright and beautiful a blossom as ever graced the earth.

CHAPTER IV.

"The hour arrived—years having roll'd away—
Upon his return the gods no more delay.
Lo! Ithaca the Fates award:—and then
New trials meet the wanderer."

THE ODYSSEY.

WHAT is life but an ocean? and what are we but the ships that sail safely upon its bosom? or the derelicts that are tossed to and fro—mere toys on the waves of passion—now stranded on a desolate shore, to wither and decay, now cast into a friendly harbour, where kindly hands once more put together the weather-beaten hull, and where, fresh rigged, it is made once more fit for service?

Disappointed—disgusted—Colonel Greville had quitted the land of his birth, seeking in strange, wild scenes, in barbarous hordes, oblivion of woman's treachery. The untruth

of one had made him mistrustful of the whole sex, and often unjust, he was always hard—had taught himself to believe that frivolity and vanity were the guiding principles of woman's heart, and that truth and innocence had no part therein.

He had at first betaken himself to the wildest regions of the world in search of excitement, but after a time he found his way back to the civilized cities of Europe, though to England he did not return for many years; and when he did, it was matters of business that recalled him, not any love of country, or friends, or home, or that yearning for old scenes, old associations, which brings back so many wanderers. He said, and believed, that he hated England and everything connected with it; but being there, he felt that he ought to run down to Wales and see how Mrs. Gaveston and her child were getting on. True, he occasionally wrote to his sister, and had given his lawyer directions respecting pecuniary matters as regarded Mrs. Gaveston, but beyond this he had taken no further trouble about the sacred charge that had been confided to him; and it was with some slight

feeling of compunction that he travelled west, and found himself at Llanfenydd.

His ward was about fifteen then, and she looked forward to his arrival as only the young *can* look forward to unknown events. It was the first one in her life, that of welcoming Aunt Mary's "young brother," her own stranger guardian, but whose letters were like revelations from another world to her. She had formed her own idea of his appearance, and as the day, the hour, of his arrival drew near, she was in a state of pleasurable excitement which was shared by the two ladies.

Surely the coach was very late—perhaps he would miss his way—should she run down to the village to meet him? By all means, said Aunt Mary, it would be a kindly attention. Thus authorised, she started like a young fawn across the garden and paddock, taking a short cut to the village, through which, innocent of a railroad, the coach passed three times a week.

She reached the inn, found that the stranger had been put down, and that the coach had already gone on. She looked inquisitively at a portmanteau that stood in the porch, and

seeing that Colonel Greville's name was clearly written on it, was satisfied that it was all right, and after many injunctions to the landlady about the room, she sped lightly home, bounding in by the open window as Colonel Greville entered, more decorously, by the door.

"He has come, Aunt Mary, I have seen his luggage. I have missed him, but he is sure to be here directly, for he told them that he knew his way."

She spoke eagerly, not perceiving that he was standing in the doorway, gazing at the beautiful child who so warmly heralded his coming. He uttered his sister's name. Mrs. Dacres started up, hesitated a moment, and then—to Eveline's unbounded astonishment—she clasped the rugged stranger in her arms.

"Is *this* the young brother?" she asked herself, in amazement. "Why, he is an old man."

Fifteen thinks forty very old; but when fifteen approaches that venerable age, it makes a good many allowances; at the present moment, however, the girl regarded him as a sort of Methuselah.

"I need not ask if this is my fair ward, who, when I last saw her, was no higher than the table;" and Colonel Greville, taking the blushing girl by both her hands, looked earnestly at her and kissed her on the forehead. "Your father was my eldest and dearest friend—you are very like him."

"Am I?" said Eveline, looking up pleased. "I am very glad."

Greville laughed sarcastically. "Woman's vanity," thought he, "even in this child. Inherent in the sex." Then aloud: "You may well be pleased to resemble him, he was the handsomest young fellow I ever saw."

"It was not for that," said she, reproachfully. "You *know* it was not! I am glad, because my mother has no picture of my father," and the dark blue eyes, moist with upbraiding tears, gazed fearlessly into his.

The look brought back to him some boyish dispute with Philip Gaveston, who had looked at him with just such eyes—wet—reproachful—challenging an unjust accusation. He was touched, and he now said to the daughter, what he had said to her father

five-and-twenty years before, "Forgive me," and held out his hand.

They were friends again in a moment, and the afternoon and evening went all too fast for her. It was a rare pleasure in her young life to meet with one who had seen and travelled so much, and who had met with such wonderful adventures—they made a short cut to intimacy.

"It is delightful to walk with you," said she, with naïve enthusiasm, as on the following morning, after breakfast, they started off on a long expedition, she assuring him that nothing ever tired her. "I have never walked with any one—not a real walk, you know—except Nero—down! old fellow!" she cried, as the Newfoundland, hearing his name, jumped upon her. "I am very fond of him; but for all he looks so wise, I am afraid that he don't understand a great deal that I say to him—do you, old boy?"

"And what are these mystic conversations that you hold with him?"

"I don't quite know, myself; but I have great ideas," said she, solemnly.

Colonel Greville burst out laughing.

"You laugh because *you* can enjoy what *I* think about?" said Eveline.

"Not knowing what it is that you think about, I cannot answer that."

"I think of vast worlds,"—and the child stopped in their walk, and gazed around with a look as though she saw far beyond the horizon—"and I people them with grand, noble beings, who live to perform great actions and do away with all the misery in the world. For I suppose there is some misery?"

"I am afraid that there is a good deal."

"Is there, really? I am very sorry to hear that." And the child was silent for a while, then she began again: "Don't you love the old Crusaders? don't you wish that you had lived in those grand days? I do. Though I should like to have been a Cavalier, and helped to put my king on his throne. I often think of those days and the noble deeds done then."

"What a Jacobite I have found here!" laughed her guardian. "What will you say, I wonder, when I tell you that I admire Cromwell a great deal more than Charles?"

She looked at him in blank astonishment.

"I won't believe it," said she, stoutly.

Presently their conversation turned on poetry; and she spoke enthusiastically of "Excelsior." Colonel Greville was very prosaic, and, partly to tease her, said—

"You mean the story of the young man who goes up a mountain for no particular purpose, except that a star may fall; which would probably crush the world."

"'A voice like a falling star,'" said Eveline, musingly. "Can you not imagine it? A silver bell, so ethereal, that in its descent it echoes through all the world, bidding us up—calling us on to glorious regions. I often sing that, and try to get a note like my idea. Listen." And her sweet young voice rose high in the air, with so much power and in such perfect intonation, that Colonel Greville was startled.

"Who taught you to sing, child?" said he.

"No one," she answered, simply; "I sing to the clouds—I sing to the mountains—I sing to the river. Sometimes I get a large leaf and put a twig through it (that I may know it again), and I float it on the river and

watch the current carry it down. And if it gets stranded, I sing a dirge ; but sometimes it goes sailing on till, I dare say, it reaches the ocean ; and then I think of all it sees and hears, above and below—the coral caves and sea-nymphs. If you promise not to laugh, I will show you a story I have written about my leaf on the river, and the illustrations I have made for it."

"And do you pass all your days in this dreamy way?" asked Colonel Greville, touched at the solitary life the child was leading.

"Not all my days—only part of my days. I could not trouble my mother nor Aunt Mary with my rubbish."

"But you may your guardian," laughed he, but pleased at the confidence reposed in him.

"I beg your pardon. I am *so* sorry. I fear I have been teasing you," said she, penitently.

Colonel Greville assured her to the contrary, but she felt that politeness alone had induced him to listen to her, so she strove to be sensible and more agreeable. And signally failed.

Her guardian began to blame himself for having left this sweet flower to blossom

without any companionship but that of an elderly lady and a sick mother, and felt that he had hardly done his duty by her, and wondered whether it would not be a good plan to send her to school, where she would have young companions. He asked her.

"School?" cried she, amazed. "Why should you send me to school?"

He told her his reasons, but she shook her head.

"What friends *can* I want but *la mia madre* and Aunt Mary? And now I have got you. I want nobody else; and as for companions, are there not the flowers—the trees—the river—the stars (though you don't believe in *my* stars)," she said, archly, "and the sun 'sailing on to his home in the far, far west,'—are they not companions? I talk to them, and they talk to me."

"Have you no friends, child — human friends, I mean — in the neighbourhood?" asked her guardian, to whom she was a perfect puzzle — so bright, so happy, yet so dreamy and solitary.

"Well, everybody is our friend; they all love us. Aunt Mary is so good to them."

Colonel Greville explained his meaning more clearly to this child of nature, who studied a moment, and then answered—

"I suppose that Mrs. Jones, the clergyman's wife, is a lady; she is very kind to me —she teaches me to make jams.

"Jams?" repeated he, inquiringly.

Eveline nodded her head. "She says that I ought to understand preserving, but I am afraid I don't care much about it," and she looked up with a pretty, deprecating look.

He fairly laughed.

"Then you don't think it so important for a woman?" she asked, encouraged by his laugh.

"I should think it important for my housekeeper," he rejoined, "but I think we may leave it out of your education."

"I am so glad," replied his ward, with a sigh of relief, "for I do think that I have a soul above jams."

"Well, I do not exactly care about your being a cook," said her guardian, much amused.

"I am glad to hear it," said she, seriously; "those jams have been greatly on my

mind. It's a sticky business—and then standing over a kitchen fire on a lovely summer's day—when everything is calling one out—*is* a trial. Jams are made in summer, you know," she added, shaking her little head very wisely. "Mr. and Mrs. Lloydd call sometimes — they are neighbours — and I gather flowers for her; and she says, 'Thank you, my pretty dear; you do grow, indeed! you are quite overtopping Aunt Mary.' Then he—meaning a great joke—says, 'Very improper behaviour, young lady; yes, indeed,' and he shakes his fist at me, and then they get into their carriage and drive away. *I* laugh, but Aunt Mary won't; she laughs in her heart, I know, for I see her biting her lips not to smile."

Colonel Greville laughed, and asked if anyone fished the river in these parts.

"Only Mr. Owen's deaf and dumb boy; he caught those sewin you had for breakfast. The river belongs to Mr. Owen; he lives up the hill yonder, on the other side. His poor son's only pleasure is fishing. I dare say we shall meet him as we come back by the river,

and then you can ask him for leave to fish—you fish, I suppose?"

Yes, Colonel Greville did fish.

"I suppose you do everything," said she, with innocent admiration. "Were you ever afraid when you were alone in the desert, and lions attacked you?"

"Not very often," and the black moustache twitched.

"*We* used to be afraid for you, I can tell you, especially when you did not write for a year or more. Did you never long to come back?"

"Well, no, I don't think I did," said he, amused at her frank questioning.

"I am sure *I* could not go away for all these years. It must be *dreadful.*"

"I did not find it so. I went abroad to—forget."

"To forget?" she cried, in amazement. "Can any one *wish* to forget? I hope I *never* may forget a single event in my life."

Colonel Greville looked curiously at this bright creature, and involuntarily sighed.

The two days that he had promised to spend with his sister, drew out to a fortnight,

and with this child for his companion, the time passed more quickly than he—the cynic, the hard, unbelieving man of the world—would have quite cared to own. The pure, unsullied page of nature's sweetest book—a guileless young girl—was open before him, and he looked thereon and was fascinated. Then laughing at his own childishness, he took his leave and went abroad again for two years.

Why should any one be ashamed of owning to himself that he can resign himself, if only for an hour, to the sweet feeling of innocence and childhood? What is philosophy in comparison to innocent happiness? The only grief is, that the latter passes from us all too soon.

Since his betrayal, Colonel Greville had sedulously closed his heart against anything like affection. To harden his feelings, to disbelieve in all women, to make a world to himself, had been the principal clauses in the ethical religion that he laid down for his guidance; and finding an increasing tenderness of feeling towards the child of his old

friend coming over him and breaking the covering of ice in which he imagined himself encased, he went away before he was demoralized!

CHAPTER V.

"She was just the kind of person that takes the judgment by storm: whether grave or gay, there was so charming and irresistible a grace about her. She seemed born not only to captivate the giddy, but to turn the heads of the sage."

BULWER LYTTON.

BEAUTY!—sung from the days of Helen till now, and will be till time is time no more—how great and blessed a gift art thou! Softening the heart of one, cheering another, and stealing into all! Truly thou art a divine attribute, but how hard to paint!

"Who hath not proved how feebly words essay
To fix one spark of beauty's heavenly ray?"

for there is a beauty far beyond that of mere form—a beauty which is the child of the heart—which emanates from the soul, and from a sweet loving nature; and such was the

beauty of Eveline Gaveston when Colonel Greville, at the expiration of two years, found himself once more in the presence of his ward. She had passed the mystic boundary—the child had developed into the woman—and the most lovely one that had ever dawned upon his satiated eyes.

It was not only the glorious symmetry of her perfect womanhood, nor the exquisite features, nor the faultless complexion, nor the golden hair—all were beautiful, but it was

> "The light of love, the purity of grace,
> The mind, the music breathing from the face,
> The heart whose softness harmonised the whole,"

which broke upon him as the fairest vision he had ever seen. None could look on that face and not feel that he was gazing into a mirror of truth and purity.

Colonel Greville was startled, charmed, bewitched. The half shyness of dawning womanhood mingled with the lingering freedom of the child, as she came forward with a soft, winning way, peculiarly her own, to welcome back the traveller.

Beautiful she was, and no man is insensible to beauty; but it was not that alone which

gave her so great a charm in his eyes. It was the unsuspecting truth which knew no evil; it was the child-like trust and guilelessness which showed in every thought, word, and deed, that came as a new revelation to him, and which brought back, as day by day he watched her, his better and softer feelings, his belief in woman's truth and goodness, and all the natural chivalry of his nature. The hard, proud man, who imagined that he had a mind above such frivolity as love—who believed that he despised women and the world—was fast succumbing to the true, untainted nature of a girl of seventeen!

Is it the narrowness of our mortality which puts it in the power of one being to so shake our faith in human nature that we grow to distrust a whole sex? which makes us believe that if the *one* who was to us the embodiment of all truth and goodness can be false, that *all* must be false? which makes us take that *one* as the type of half the human race? It is a small, illiberal view, and yet one which even the most generous and the most trustful have accepted in its greatest keenness.

But the divine spark, though it may lie

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dormant for years, is rarely wholly extinguished: and time—blessed healer!—will dull the pain, and perchance bring before us another being who shall restore to us our holy faith in good.

Verily is our judgment more swayed by our feelings than many of us—men especially—are willing to own!

If Eveline Gaveston had a fault, it was not one which a man was likely to quarrel with; and it was one which only a mother—more loving and thoughtful for her child than for herself—could restrain without throwing the tender, loving heart back upon itself. She was generous and self-sacrificing to a fault, and her unselfishness made her yielding almost to weakness.

Guarded, sheltered by love and pure surroundings from every evil, no harm could arise from so sweet and amiable a quality, and emanating as it did from one who had been indulged and petted from her birth, it possessed a double charm. But how might it be in after years, when sterner stuff is needed to meet the battle of life?

But this was not a thought that occurred

to Colonel Greville, who, delighted with her earnest, cultivated, and refined mind, took a keen pleasure in directing her intellect through the flowery paths of learning, or—no mean artist himself—in guiding the genius that his young ward displayed for drawing.

They were happy days then, when mounted on the Arab that he had brought for her, he first taught her to ride, or rambled with her by the river-side, or rowed her along its current, exchanging thoughts and ideas, or recounting to her such incidents of his travels as would interest her.

The days flowed on like a summer stream: laughing, whispering, babbling in the sunshine without one thought of the ocean to which it was speeding.

How his old comrades would have laughed to have seen the man who never yet found any excitement sufficient for him, contentedly passing his time in amusing—or as he called it, forming the mind of his young ward—and spending his evenings at the fireside of his aged sister, waiting on an invalid! But what of the young voice, that though untaught, sang with such heavenly sweetness?

that, equally melodious in talking, would eagerly enter into discussions with him, contradicting with the instinct of truth—not by the force of knowledge—his most morbid but cherished convictions?

Herein the charm—the dangerous charm—for a guardian still in the prime of life when his ward is young and beautiful.

Dangerous to him, but how to her, to whom he was an elderly man—a second father—a kind guardian—to be scolded if necessary, but always to be revered?

The danger was not to her; but in the very familiarity of her ways with him, there was peril to him, and very rapidly was she becoming dearer than life to the once hardened traveller, whose crust of ice she had completely thawed. But so calmly and peacefully did the days pass by, that love stole upon him unawares, like a midsummer's dream. He gave it no name—the affection which he felt for the child of his dead friend: he was very happy and asked himself no questions, till in one moment—in a flash of lightning—the truth was revealed to him. He loved

once more, with a deep, passionate love, greater than he had ever felt for Caroline Buller.

And Eveline, did *she* love him?

CHAPTER VI.

"Oh! there are looks and tones that dart
An instant sunshine thro' the heart;
As if the soul that minute caught
Some treasure it thro' life had sought;
As if the very lips and eyes
Predestined to have all our sighs,
And never be forgot again,
Sparkled and spoke before us then."

LALLA ROOKH.

COLONEL GREVILLE had left Llanfenydd for a few days, and in his absence his pupil was preparing a chef-d'œuvre in water-colours wherewith to astonish him on his return.

The spot she had selected for her subject was on the banks of her loved river, not in its calmly flowing beauty, but where a mountain torrent, streaming away from its birth-place and gathering strength from every spring in its headlong course, hurried down the wooded

hill-side and foamed over dark rich-coloured rocks into a deep, quiet pool—too deep to be troubled by its noisy chattering—in which were mirrored the overhanging trees, the deep blue sky, and the crimson clouds of sunset. Peacefully flowed the river through the deep pool, while on the rocks, that kept in the dark waters, grew rich-tinted mosses and graceful ferns.

It was as lovely a spot as ever charmed an artist's eye ; and thither had Eveline repaired to finish her sketch. She was deeply absorbed in her occupation when the light, sunset breeze of autumn carried off her straw hat and deposited it in the river.

Laughing at the mischance, she was about to send her Newfoundland after it, when she saw it dexterously caught with a rod and line, and turning to thank, as she supposed, her deaf and dumb friend, young Owen, she encountered the gaze of a stranger, and a very admiring gaze too, as he stood there—dripping hat in hand.

He was a man whose like she had never seen. Young, graceful, slight—but with a well-knit figure—plainly but faultlessly

dressed, and with a nameless air of ease and refinement which may nearly always be traced to early and habitual association with high-bred women.

She started, blushed, and said something about thinking that it was Mr. Owen who had rescued her hat.

"Mr. Owen is more fortunate than myself in having the pleasure of knowing you," said the other, with easy grace; "I am only his guest since to-day."

"Have you then come to fish our river?" asked Eveline, with the curiosity of youth.

"*Our* river?" repeated the stranger; "are you then Mr. Owen's—," and there he stopped —that lovely girl, daughter to his burly host? Impossible.

"'Daughter,' you would say," replied Eveline, the pride of race showing in the sudden curve of the short upper lip, and in the unconscious uprearing of the little stag-like head; "no, I have not that honour."

"Pardon me; one could not suppose it. I was about to ask if you were part owner of the river," said he, audaciously.

The sense of the ridiculous so struck Eveline,

that she broke into a merry, silvery laugh, so infectious that the stranger joined in it.

"No, I am neither Mr. Owen's daughter, nor owner of the river; but I live here all the same," she said, looking round with pardonable pride in her proprietorship of the lovely scenery.

"Is it possible?"

"Quite possible—why not?" asked Eveline, with the frank astonishment of a child in the large, blue eyes which she turned upon him.

"I should hardly have thought that one so——;" the ingenuous look on the childlike face stopped the careless gallantries that were on his lips.

After a moment's pause,

"You have chosen a lovely spot for your sketch," he said. "How well the light breaks in upon those distant hills, touching the river that winds like a silver thread round those dark rocks! It is like a vision of happiness, seen in the distance—never to be reached—and as fleeting; for see! the light has already vanished."

His melancholy philosophy was as Greek to Eveline, who saw sunshine everywhere; but

it sounded very poetical and romantic, especially as the voice that uttered it was remarkably melodious ; and she looked with greater interest at one who seemed so bright and careless, yet who must, she imagined, have known much sorrow, to talk of happiness being evanescent. He was gazing into the far distance so lost in thought, that he was unobservant, *apparently*, of her scrutiny, which partook as much of the curiosity of a child, as of the deeper feeling of a woman for one who has awakened her interest.

He was, what seemed to her, past youth—that is, he might be seven-and-twenty—had curling, brown hair, well-grown auburn moustaches and whiskers, a shapely chin with a dimple in it, but with no particular claim to beauty ; but before she could decide on the expression of a face that puzzled her, he turned it towards her—a lurking smile beneath his moustache—and met a pair of dark blue eyes, fixed intently on him—eyes which instantly dropped beneath their long, curved, black lashes, with a painful feeling of shyness.

What he might have said—for *he* was not

troubled with diffidence—remains unknown, for the harsh guttural voice of the deaf and dumb boy broke the *tête-à-tête*, and not caring for the invidious position in which the boy's appearance placed him, the fisherman gathered up his rod, raised his hat, and went on his way.

Eveline, regardless of the wrathful exclamations of the dumb boy, who was dancing about her in a frenzy of jealousy, to which he could give no articulate utterance, gazed on the gray tweed figure that went down the river side with an easy, swinging grace.

"Who is that fellow you were talking to?" he snapped off his fingers.

"How dare you be so rude? You forget to whom you are speaking," was the young lady's response, as she packed up her drawing things —painting was at an end for *that* day.

"Oh, Eveline, don't say that! Anything but that!" and the boy fell on his knees before his idol.

The idol relented, and condescended to inform him of the circumstance.

"But don't you know him? He is staying at your house."

Owen did not know him, he had been from home, and was only just returning. Aunt Mary was getting old, and her sight growing dim, or she would probably have noticed the blush that tinged Eveline's cheek as she recounted what was to her an adventure, with a friend of Mr. Owen's.

Evidently no friend of Mr. Owen's could be worth talking of, for Aunt Mary only said, "Did you, my dear?" and with a slight shiver and a glance at the open window, observed that the evening was very chilly.

"Dear aunty, why did you not have the fire lighted?" exclaimed Eveline, in a second shutting the window and putting a match to the fire.

"It was quite an adventure, Aunt Mary," presently said the girl, resting her round arm on the old lady's knees, and watching the blazing wood. "My hat blew off, and he caught it so neatly."

"I hope he did not bite it, my dear; he quite spoilt your last one," said Aunt Mary, thinking of Nero's last exploit.

Eveline's laugh still rang in the room when her mother, assisted by her maid, came in.

In an instant her strong young arm was round the invalid, helping her to her couch by the fireside.

Mrs. Gaveston shivered, and seeing her child still with her walking things on, wondered how she could stay out so late on these cold evenings.

Eveline did not say that the evening was lovely or that the soft, autumn breeze was warm and delicious to her young blood, but tenderly wrapping a warm Indian shawl round the invalid, she nestled down at her side, silent and caressing.

Who has not felt that there are times when not only are words not wanting, but are impossible ?

Doubtless very different thoughts were flowing through the hearts of mother and child ; but as Mrs. Gaveston stroked the golden head that rested against her, neither needed words to tell the other of the deep love that existed between them.

The reserve that had pained Eveline as a child, had greatly passed away as she neared womanhood—the weaker nature, the feebler frame, now leant on the stronger—and the

bond between them was very precious, very tender.

On the following day, Eveline, with a strange feeling of coyness, lingered about going down to the river side.

Mrs. Dacres reminded her that the afternoon was passing away, and that the drawing would not be finished by the morrow.

"You had better take the pony-carriage, or you will be so late. It is a very pretty picture," she said, taking up the block.

"Come with me, aunty," coaxed Eveline; "come and see it."

"Not to-day, my dear, I really must be busy now. Some other day you shall drive me there."

Was Eveline pleased, or not, that she was thus compelled to run the chance of meeting the stranger again alone? She could not tell, but her heart beat faster than usual as she pulled up at the sketching place.

Up and down the river did she look, but not a soul was in sight; so reassured, she dismissed the pony-carriage, took up her position—her dog by her side—and was soon

too absorbed by her occupation to think of anything else.

An hour had passed on, her sketch was finished, and she was holding it at arm's length, criticising it, singing to herself the while.

> "Move eastward, happy earth, and leave
> Yon orange sunset waning slow :
> From fringes of the faded eve,
> Oh, happy planet, eastward go,
> Till over thy dark shoulder glow
> My silver sister-world, and rise
> To glass herself in dewy eyes,
> That watch me from the glen below."

Nero's tail was flapping a lazy welcome, but not till a shadow fell across her drawing, did she know that she was not alone. This time she did *not* suppose that it was the dumb boy, but looked up, blushing "celestial rosy-red."

"Happy earth, to be apostrophised by so sweet a voice," said the fisherman, lifting his hat. "I thought that perhaps this splendid sunset might tempt you here again — the weather looks likely to change."

"Hardly," said Eveline, perturbed, but relieved as the subject of his conversation

changed to so prosaic a vein, and glancing up at the sky. "The clouds are gathering heavily, but I think it is only the heat. We seldom have storms from the north."

"How well you draw," said the fisherman, taking up the block that she had placed on the bank; "and how well you sing. I suppose you have masters in London?"

"No, I have never been to London. I have lived here all my life, but I have a very good master, nevertheless. I am afraid I am not a very creditable pupil," she continued, bending a keen gaze on the distant landscape, "for I cannot get those glorious gleams of light, those delicate yet vivid tints which linger everywhere in nature."

"Do you think art can ever equal nature?" said the gray man, admiring the perfect ease and unstudied grace of the girl's attitude.

"I have never seen any pictures," she replied, all unconscious of the tone of admiration in which he spoke, a tone which a more polished young lady would at once have detected, "but I thought that the old masters —and indeed some modern ones—had at-

tained perfection," and she looked up inquiringly.

"The perfection of art, perhaps; not the perfection of nature."

"N—no," she replied, considering. "I can understand that; for a painting can only represent a given moment, whereas in nature nothing is still. And there is the great charm—that incessant change! Look at that mist curling up the hill-side, gaining beauty every moment as it rises into the golden light of the hill-tops, and see what a lovely picture it leaves to view!"

"Is it possible that at your age you already feel satiety and love of change?" asked the stranger, with an amused smile.

"Satiety?" repeated Eveline. "I don't quite understand what the word means; at any rate, I cannot realise it; but I do love to watch the changes in nature. Look at those trees," and she bent her head towards a small, but beautiful wood, where oak, birch, maple, in their brilliant autumn livery, contrasted with the dark green firs in colour and in sentiment,—"look at them, just tinted with the hues of their coming death—can anything

equal the splendour of that red and golden sheen? Yet a month ago the wealth of summer foliage was, in its way, as beautiful—and will be, later on, when every tender spray is laden with hoar-frost—silver trees, glittering with diamonds as the sun shines forth. Not all the jewelled trees of the Eastern story-teller could equal one of those."

"You have a poetical imagination."

Eveline, who had spoken out of the fulness of her love for nature, coloured, and was half ashamed of an enthusiasm which came of her southern blood.

"And do you like change in all things?" pursued the fisherman, charmed with the young girl who was so unconscious of an admiration which many women sighed for in vain, for Henry Vandeleur's verdict went a long way in London drawing-rooms. It was something new to find that his admiration was neither sought nor felt, and the novelty piqued him.

"Oh, no!" replied Eveline warmly, and thinking of her mother. "There are some things that I would not only stop, but put back in the wheel of time."

"Such as——"

"My mother is very ill."

She strove to steady her voice, but the giving utterance to the sorrow that filled her heart broke down her self-control, and she burst into a flood of tears.

Inexpressibly shocked and concerned, Vandeleur longed to speak some soothing words to stop the tears that he had so unintentionally evoked; but the grief was so genuine that he was somewhat taken aback, and he was much minded to draw her golden head on his breast and whisper words of consolation—words that would recall the brilliant smile that but a moment ago had lighted up her face like a sunbeam. Would she be angry if he did? Pshaw! a mere child, if not in years, certainly in knowledge of the world.

He was close to her—her head perilously near, when Eveline, all unconscious of the impending danger, looked up—her eyes still swimming in tears—and murmured some unintelligible words.

Vandeleur, nearly taken *in flagrante delicto*, started back.

"Forgive me, Miss Gaveston," said he;

"forgive the unpardonable *gaucherie* which could cause you even a moment's pain."

Eveline looked up, her dark eyelashes still laden with tears, a sight which nearly distracted him—such eyes! "Sapphires set in diamonds—pshaw! violets dipped in dew—worse and worse; fathomless depths of heaven—that is nearer the mark," thought he, as she looked up innocently and asked how he knew her name.

He drew closer to her—all the closer that she turned so shyly from him.

"Of course I know your name," he spoke, in a low, caressing tone, which vibrated strangely on her heart. "Did you think that I should forget our meeting yesterday? Did you believe that I *could* see you, and not ask who you were? Are you vexed with me for coming here to-day in the sweet hope of seeing you again?"

Lower and softer sank the voice, and the river went murmuring on, laughing, rippling as before, and lower drooped the blushing face beneath the ardent gaze.

Oh! Vandeleur, was this right? Was this well? Such tones, such words, would be but

sparks from flint and steel, uttered to the pretty triflers that you have hitherto toyed with—but to this child of nature, to whom words not faithful to themselves are things unknown ?

I can fancy some of my fair readers scoffingly say that such want of pride deserved a punishment—that to accept attentions from an unknown man, proves an utter want of delicacy.

Possibly—where a girl has been brought up in the world with young companions, and has the run of a circulating library. But Eveline had lived her seventeen years almost alone — had never read a novel, and was ignorant and confiding as a child of seven. Why or wherefore the tones thrilled through her heart she could not say ; but that they did, the blushing cheek and downcast face plainly told. How was she to know that it was but summer pastime to him ?—that he was amusing himself, as the butterfly hovers over the rose to flit away to the tulip ?

Some feeling of compunction came over Vandeleur as he saw her trouble, and he bethought him that he was going rather far with the pretty village maiden, who took his

badinage so seriously. He drew back, and leaning aganst the bank, he called the dog to him and lazily pulled his long ears.

The mesmeric influence that he had cast over her like a spell was broken, and, ashamed at her momentary perturbation, Eveline was herself again.

"I believe I know your people in Yorkshire," said Vandeleur, "but I am very sure that they do not know of your existence down here. Have you ever been to Gaveston Abbey?"

"I have no people except mamma and Aunt Mary, and she is not really my aunt," replied Eveline.

"Surely, I am not mistaken in thinking you are a granddaughter of the late Lord Pierrepoint?"

"No, you are right," she answered; "but he died a long time ago, and the present people are no relations."

"That means you will not own them," said Vandeleur, laughing; "*they* look on the late earl as a cousin, I assure you."

"Do they? But mamma is my only relation, and she is a Colonna." The words were

proud, but not the voice, which simply uttered a truth.

"A great name; but even a Colonna may claim relationship with the Gavestons without losing caste," replied Vandeleur, with a smile.

"Of course!" retorted Eveline, drawing up her little head. "Am I not half a Gaveston myself? I meant that my mother, being Italian, does not care to seek out English connections of ever so many degrees off."

"The loss is theirs, at all events," he replied, "but not an irretrievable one. I hope I may have the pleasure of meeting you at Gaveston some day."

"Nothing more unlikely," laughed Eveline, packing up her drawing materials, and rising to return home. "Besides, nothing would induce me to leave my dear mother—Aunt Mary—my happy home. No; I shall never go to Gaveston."

"Don't be too sure," replied Vandeleur. "We never know what we may do in this world. Let me carry your block—our roads lie together. Your master will be pleased with this, surely."

"He is always pleased, but never satisfied, even with his own sketches—a thousand times better than that."

"Is he, then, so stern a master?"

"Stern?" repeated Eveline, stopping short in her amazement: "what *could* make you suppose it? He is the kindest old man. He is my guardian. *So* clever—so agreeable. I wish he were here that you might judge for yourself. I always fancy that he is what my father would have been to me. You know the Gavestons—I wonder if you ever saw my father?"

"I only know this branch, and never was at Gaveston till they came into possession," answered the other. "And how old is this venerable guardian who has the good fortune to call Miss Gaveston his ward?"

"Ah, do not say good fortune. Remember, I am only his ward because I have lost my father."

"Forgive me," said Vandeleur, "I seem fated to utter some *bêtise* every time I speak to you. How you will hate me."

"Hate you? Why should I hate you?" said Eveline, looking up with a bright, frank

face, but her eyes dropped before the look which she encountered.

They had reached the bridge which led to the cottage—just as well that they did so—and they paused to say farewell.

"I shall mark this day with a golden letter," said Vandeleur, with a lingering clasp of her hand; "it is one that *I* shall never forget, while *you* will not even give a passing thought to the wandering fisherman, unless, indeed, one of annoyance to think that he interrupted your drawing."

"No, indeed," began Eveline, but stopping abashed, and endeavouring to withdraw the hand of which Vandeleur had taken possession; but he held it in a warm clasp, and ere releasing it, he bent his head and kissed the soft palm, and she blushed. It was an era in her life—a moment not to be readily forgotten.

He stood looking at her till she was out of sight.

"A charming and a lovely rustic," was his private comment. "Well-bred, though, and looks it—every inch of her—but a perfect little rustic."

Eveline hastened home, her heart strangely perturbed. The great era in a woman's life had dawned—the first glimpse into that other world had opened to her; and shy, bashful, yet knowing not wherefore, she instinctively sought the privacy of her own room ere meeting any one else. For the first time she made her evening toilette before looking in upon her two dear ones.

She was very silent, but after the evening meal was over she took up her usual place at her mother's feet.

Had she been alone with her she would have poured out her heart to her; but such a confidence was too sacred to be uttered before a third, even though that third was Aunt Mary; so,

"*Madre mia*, I met the gray man again."

"The gray man!" exclaimed both ladies at once.

"The gentleman I met yesterday," replied Eveline, shyly.

"You never told me of any one," replied her mother.

"I remember," said Mrs. Dacres, "you did say something about a friend of Mr. Owen's;

I dare say it was his brother-in-law. He is rather an old man, and has remarkably white hair. I wonder what has brought him down here, for there has been a long-standing feud between them ?"

"I don't think it is Mr. Owen's brother-in-law, and his *hair* is not gray, only his clothes, aunty," said Eveline, laughing.

"My dear, what *do* you mean ?"

"What I said, aunty. His hat was gray, his coat was gray ; in short he was gray all over ; you could only call him a gray man ; but he was very pleasant nevertheless. He knew who I was, and he knows what he calls 'our people at Gaveston Abbey,' and says that they really are our cousins. Are they, mamma ?"

"My dear child," replied her mother, "you seem to have been very confidential with this stranger ; who is he ?"

"I don't know, but he is a gentleman."

"My dear Eveline," said Mrs. Dacres, "how can you tell ? You must not make acquaintances like this. Why the man may belong to a gang of burglars. Such things have been known."

Eveline laughed.

"Don't be alarmed, dear old aunty; he is no robber, but as well bred a gentleman as Colonel Greville himself, and now we will have some music."

CHAPTER VII.

"*Des.* I never gave him cause.
Emil. But jealous souls will not be answered so;
They are not ever jealous for the cause,
But jealous for they are jealous; 'tis a monster,
Begot upon itself, born on itself."

OTHELLO.

"THIS is delightful!" cried Eveline, the next morning, as Colonel Greville rapped at the window of the breakfast-room where she and Mrs. Dacres sat at their morning repast. "When did you come?"

"Last night, fair lady," said he, stepping in. "Have you got anything for me to eat?"

"A cup of cold tea and some toast to correspond," laughed Eveline, ringing the bell for some reinforcements to the table. "Why did you not send up word that you were coming, and then Aunt Mary would have ordered all sorts of good things for you?"

"I dare say I can make out a breakfast," he

answered, greeting his sister. "I have done all your commissions, Mary, and yours too, little one; the box will be up directly. I have something here for you besides;" and so saying he put into her hands a small morocco case.

Her innocent expressions of delight at the pretty bauble—a bracelet set with diamonds—amply repaid him.

"Have you a mind for a walk this morning?" he said presently.

"With you? Of course I have; I love a walk with you, and you shall tell me all you have been doing, for you have not written for ages."

"And has it seemed so long to you, Eveline?" said he, tenderly.

Eveline opened her eyes with amazement. "Long? of course it has, we should like to hear every day."

Merrily and happily they pursued their walk, but their pleasure was destined to have a check. They met the man in gray!

Eveline would have stopped to speak, but Vandeleur, better acquainted with the etiquette of society, bowed and passed on, while Nero bounded after him in friendly recognition.

Greville marked the dog's greeting; and the vivid blush and look of pleasure, changing to one of disappointment on Eveline's transparent countenance, were not lost upon him.

"You did not tell me that you had any acquaintances here; who is he?" He strove to speak indifferently, but only succeeded in being extremely curt and rude.

"I really do not know, except that he is a friend of Mr. Owen's and has been fishing here," said Eveline, blushing still more deeply, and wondering why her guardian spoke so roughly. She related how their acquaintance began, and that she had met him again yesterday. Poor Eveline spoke timidly, for this was the first time she had ever been accosted in a rough voice.

"And I suppose he came to meet you again to-day," said Greville, grimly.

"Indeed you are wrong," she replied meekly, for he told me that he was going to-day;" but even as she spoke a delicious thrill stole over her troubled heart as she wondered whether he had postponed his departure in order to see her again.

"He is not at the inn, or I should have

heard of it," continued Colonel Greville, whose equanimity was completely upset.

"He is staying at Mr. Owen's," replied Eveline. The Colonel did not answer. All pleasure was destroyed for the remainder of that walk. The busy demon of jealousy was aroused in his breast, not that he acknowledged it, oh dear no! It was his duty as her guardian to be careful what acquaintances she made, but he was extremely wroth that this good-looking young man—so evidently a gentleman—should have presumed to draw her into conversation. He had of course come this morning to meet her. Fortunate that he, Greville, was with her! And a grim smile came over his face at the thought of the discomfiture which he had inflicted on one in whom he instinctively guessed a rival and a dangerous one.

They walked home nearly in silence. Eveline's gentle attempts to amuse him met with no response—he could not forget the mantling blush of pleasure that had crimsoned her face, and the happy, half-shy smile that brightened it as she recognised the "gray man;" and he was excessively out of temper.

"Who the devil is he, and what the deuce

is he doing down here?" was the burden of his thoughts, more emphatic than polite. "No, he would not come in, thanks all the same; he had letters to write."

He held the garden gate for her to pass through, and then struck off to the inn—raging—and stalked up to his room where he paced heavily up and down.

"Fool, dolt that I am!" he ejaculated at intervals. "Forty-three, and she seventeen! How could I expect anything else? Greville, you are an ass, a d——d ass!" This to his reflection in the mirror. "But I'll find out who this man is," and seizing his wide-awake, which he had flung violently into a corner of the room, he darted out, his long, rapid strides quickly covering the ground between the inn and Mr. Owen's dwelling.

Mr. Owen, he learnt, had gone down to the river, so thither Greville followed.

Mr. Owen was a burly, jovial Welsh squire, who in virtue of his acres held some sway in the simple neighbourhood; but it was recorded of him that he greatly preferred a social tankard of home-brewed with some of the farmers to any more refined beverage or society.

A substantial luncheon was spread on the grass near him, to which he was doing rare justice; his deaf and dumb son was sullenly counting the contents of his fishing-basket, pettishly refusing the food which his father pressed on him.

Colonel Greville greeted the Squire, and after some general conversation, carelessly said,

"By-the-way, I met a gentleman with a fishing-rod this morning. Do you know who he is?"

"A good-looking chap in gray, with reddish whiskers?" asked the Squire. "Yes, indeed, he is a first-rate fisherman;" then turning to his dumb child some rapid digital conversation passed between them, interrupted by the Squire's hilarity at some joke, which was not, however, appreciated by the other, who resented it with surly anger and was about to walk away, but his father held him back, and still boisterously laughing, spake a few words with his fingers which changed the aspect of affairs altogether. The boy's moroseness turned to an equally savage delight. He threw his cap in the air, clapped his hands,

uttered the most horrible sounds, and finally rolled on the ground, kicking his heels, unable to contain the exuberance of his delight.

Greville looked on astonished, with an uncomfortable feeling that possibly he himself might be the subject of their joke. The colour rose in his bronzed face, and drawing up his tall figure till he seemed inches taller than usual, he grimly remarked that "they seemed amused!"

"Amused! By Gad, sir, I should think I was," chuckled the Squire, his fat, red hands resting on his knees as he looked at his son performing wonderful antics on the grass. The tears fairly ran down his rubicund cheeks with laughter, and then he applied himself to a huge mug of ale.

Greville, terribly indignant, stood silent and rigid, not choosing to compromise his dignity by further questions.

"What an ill-bred old fool it is," very nearly escaped his lips.

"It's the best joke going!" gasped the Squire, putting down the mug from which he had taken a mighty draught; "I did not know what ailed the lad the last day or two,

he's been moping about, refusing his victuals, and altogether contrary; so now he says to me, he says, 'Is that fishing chap come a-courting of her?' meaning the young lady at the cottage, jerking his thumb over his shoulder and—Lord, Lord, it'll be the death of me!" here another fit of laughter choked his utterance; "why, sir, Mr. Vandeleur is a married man!"

The last words squeezed out of his laughter in a shrill treble.

"Is the chap coming a-courting of her?" he repeated, in intense appreciation of the joke.

Greville's face relaxed, and if his relief were less demonstrative than the dumb boy's, it was no less intense. The black cloud that had risen on his horizon lifted, and sunshine showed again.

"Is this Mr. Vandeleur a friend of yours?" asked Greville.

"No, indeed, I never saw him before, but I have some fishing to let in Scotland and he came to see me about it, so I asked him to stop a day or two while we waited for some business matters to be settled. 'Is the chap come a-courting?' It's the best joke I ever

heard. By Gad! he's coming! If he were not such a proud one, I'd like to tell him, but one never knows how that sort of cattle takes a joke," and the Squire shook his head knowingly, showing, if coarsely expressed, more tact than one might have expected.

"I hardly think he would appreciate it," said Greville, dryly; "some men have an unaccountable objection to making a lady's name the subject of a jest."

The Squire looked at him curiously, but Greville's impassive face was unreadable, so he took another draught from the jug, and when it was finished, Vandeleur came up and inquired if the post had come in.

"Yes, indeed; there's the bag, and here's the key. This is Colonel Greville, sir," he continued, by way of introduction, "guardian to the young lady you saw painting."

The Squire's face threatened another explosion; but, catching Greville's eye, he recovered, and devoting himself to the luncheon, pressed some on the two gentlemen.

"Come and dine with us this evening, Colonel; Mr. Vandeleur don't leave till to-

morrow, and you will be better company than we are."

Vandeleur's moustache twitched as he unslung his basket and emptied a quantity of grilse and a sea trout on to the grass, saying, "Not a bad morning's work."

The dumb boy took up the trout, nodded, making horrible, guttural sounds, expressive of approval.

The Squire winked at Greville, but met with no response from that iron face, and Vandeleur carelessly opened his letters.

"I am thinking of going to the Prairies," said he, turning from a letter he was reading, to Greville. "You know the country?"

"I was there a couple of years. A wildish life, rather—plenty of game."

"So I suppose. A place where it is as well to sleep with a revolver under one's pillow," said Vandeleur, with a light laugh.

"Just so; life is of small value there."

"If you can give me any hints, I shall be much obliged to you."

"Delighted to give you any information that I possess," replied Greville, "but beyond that you must be prepared to rough it and

trust to luck, I don't know that I can give you much advice.

"Luck is a cardinal virtue in most phases of life," said the other, laughing lightly, and rolling up the loose leaf of his cigar.

Colonel Greville did dine at the Squire's, and as he walked home afterwards, he acknowledged that Vandeleur was a very pleasant fellow, whose genial, easy manner gave him *un je ne sais quoi de caressant*, which had its charm for men, and which might easily prove dangerously fascinating where women were concerned.

"Queer, a young married fellow like that going to the Prairies," soliloquised Greville, on his way home. "How could I be such a brute to you, my darling?"

These last words had no natural connexion with Mr. Vandeleur, but were called forth by the reflection of a woman's figure on the blind of a bed-room window, beneath which he was standing.

"How late she is to-night. I wonder what she is thinking of?"

Little clouds of blue smoke curled upwards as he leant against a tree, watching the

shadow flitting backwards and forwards in the room above.

How he longed for the morrow that he might make amends for his roughness this day. How tender he would be! and, remorsefully, he recalled her gentle attempts to rouse him from his bearish mood, from which he would not be entreated.

"Oh! my darling! you little know what you are to me! I do love you! Heaven only knows how dearly!"

From which muttered ejaculations it may be inferred that when the rosy god throws his dart into mortal breast, he brings all men to the same level, all hearts to one age.

When we grow too cold—too hard—too old, if you will—to feel a throb of passion, we are apt to laugh at youth's folly, or sneer at the deeper love of maturer age; but which of us would not bring back, if we could, that moment "of delicious folly" when all the world was brighter than it ever has been since?

The blind was drawn up, the window opened, and Eveline leant out. It was not her wont to be restless and feverish, but now

she was both, and the deep solemn hush of night was grateful to her. She thought, alack the day! not of her guardian's crossness to her, but of the stranger—the man whose name she did not even know—she thought of every word he had uttered—of the tender, lingering clasp of his hand—of the kiss he had pressed on hers, and then—oh! Eveline! —she pressed the little hand to her own soft rosy lips, and, though alone, she blushed deeply. He seemed to stand before her even now—she saw him leaning with indolent grace against the bank, pulling Nero's ears, a liberty which the dog had kindly permitted—she saw him—good gracious! a cigar! some one smoking under her window! Could it be?—but the thought ended in a gasp as she hastily drew back, quickly shut the window, and pulled down the blind. She leant against the wall, her heart beating fast. Presently she blew out her candle, and, yielding to an irresistible impulse, peeped out from under a corner of the blind.

The night was dark, and all that she could distinguish was a red, glowing star, not in the heavens, but some six feet above the

ground. Presently the clouds broke, the moon shone forth, and cast her silvery light on a figure beneath the tree; but it was not the slight graceful shape in gray which had been haunting her thoughts all the day. Growing bold by that discovery, she looked again. Yes, surely; a black beard reaching to the waist!

Throwing the window open, she leant out, laughing.

"Why, Guardy, is that you keeping watch? Are there robbers about? What a lovely night! May I come out?"

Ah! what would he not give to have her there—his own, his very own? But he knew that all that his heart was bursting with, would find its way to his lips were she with him, and that *that* would ruin his hopes for ever. He knew women well enough to have wished that she had not opened her window again to accost him so frankly.

"Not to-night, my darling! it is very late, too late for you, child, to be keeping vigils. Good-night, my precious one!"

There was ineffable tenderness in his voice.

"Dear old Guardy!" said Eveline to her-

self, as she shut the window, "he is sorry for being so cross to-day, and I daresay I wasn't quite nice to him," for in her generous nature she was always ready to take all blame to herself, directly an offender showed the least contrition.

So she went to bed, and dreamt that she was wandering with the gray man along the river-side, and that as she looked at him, a long, black beard grew out of his face, and which had an unaccountable resemblance to Nero's ears. It was not becoming, even in dreamland, but not at all peculiar in the natural history of that country.

CHAPTER VIII.

"*Lady Cap.* Tell me, daughter Juliet,
How stands your disposition to be married?
Juliet. It is an honour that I dream not of."
ROMEO AND JULIET.

"All beauty, all life she was to him;
He questioned not her love,
He only knew—he loved her!"
LOVELL.

"AUNT MARY," said Eveline, the next day, stopping short in one of Beethoven's sonatas, and twirling round on the music-stool to face Mrs. Dacres, "I have come to the conclusion that my music-master from C—— has taught me all that he knows. I don't play very well, I know; but I play as well as he does; and *I* have it in me to play better, which *he* hasn't; only, I *should* like to hear some real music! And, aunty, I should like a singing-master, for I think I have got a voice."

"Bless the child!" cried Aunt Mary, looking at her over her spectacles, "I am sure you play very nicely, much better than I did at your age, and you sing sweetly, my dear."

"You are a partial judge, aunty, and I don't believe that you would scold if I sang a sharp for a flat," said Eveline, leaving the piano to come and kneel at her aunt's side, so as to look up in the gentle old face, a childish way she had. "I should like to sing splendidly. Could you not invite a master to come here and teach me? You can tell him I am half Italian, you know. We could sing together for hours. Wouldn't it be delicious?"

Aunt Mary's breath was fairly taken away by the monstrous proposal, uttered too in such perfect good faith.

"Oh, Arthur, I am so glad you have come in," said she, as her brother opened the door; "this child is crazed about some extravagant notions on music."

"Please, sir," said Eveline, demurely, "please, sir, I want to learn to sing."

"Is that it?" laughed he. "Well, the request is not unreasonable, only I don't see

at this moment how to manage it, unless I took you to London."

"To London!" exclaimed Eveline, springing to her feet, "to London! but, no," she added, in a lower tone, "I could not leave my mother."

"We will think it over, my child. But you have not asked me about my dinner-party."

"What, at Mr. Owen's? I hope you enjoyed it," and Eveline sat down to the piano again, running her fingers lightly over the keys. Her back was to her guardian, so he did not see the vivid blush that mantled on her cheek, nor could he guess that her heart was beating faster than usual, as she shyly waited to hear something of the "gray man," nor that she said so little because she dared not trust her voice to say more.

"That gentleman whom we met yesterday, Eveline, was there. He appears to know your cousins very well. He is a pleasant fellow"—the music went stealing on in soft, sweet cadence, as the performer listened to every word—"he tells me that he is just starting for the Prairies."

Colonel Greville would doubtless have said more, but that the music came to an end with a sudden crash of chords, and Eveline went to the door.

"I am going up to my mother," she said.

"One moment," said Greville, laying his hand on hers, which was already on the handle, "do you think she is well enough to see me?"

"You are not going to speak about London, are you?" said Eveline, with sudden alarm. "Please don't."

"Would you be afraid to come with me, Eveline?" he asked, as they crossed the lobby.

"Afraid? No, why should I be afraid?" She turned towards him, but there was something in the loving eyes that met hers—the same look that had made hers droop before the fisherman's gaze when he bid her farewell—which made her draw shyly back.

"*Madre mia*," said she, running into her mother's room, "are you well enough to see Colonel Greville? But you must not let him worry you, darling, you look so white and tired."

She did indeed look tired, so white, so frail, so transparent—almost like one dead already—the black pencilled eyebrows and lashes painfully contrasting the white, wan face on which they rested.

"What does he want, my child?" she asked.

"Something about my music, I fancy—some nonsense that I was talking to *la zia*," said Eveline, innocently.

"Is that all? But something has troubled you, my Eveline, what is it?"

She spoke with ineffable tenderness, as she drew the golden head close to her, and kissed the sweet upturned face.

The girl's first impulse was to bury her face in her mother's bosom, and pour out her little secret, not much of one after all, but to her one that now covered her with shame—she had been so ready to accept attentions from a stranger who had evidently been amusing himself at her expense, and her poor little heart was very sore; but a look at her mother's wan and weary face banished in a moment all thoughts of self. The dreadful truth stood before her—her mother was dying. She

clasped her in a passionate embrace, stifling a wail of agony in the pillow.

What was self, what was the gray fisherman, what was anything, if that sweet, precious mother were going from her? Her whole frame shook with convulsive sobs, and the piteous cry, "Madre! Madre!" broke from her lips.

It was almost more than Mrs. Gaveston could bear, and knowing that she needed all her strength for the interview with Colonel Greville, she spoke soothingly to her child, and then bid her send him to her. She guessed his errand.

The weeping girl did as she was bid, and then sought her own room, where alone she could give vent to all the bitter sorrow of her heart. She had never remembered her mother other than an invalid, but the decay had been so gradual, that not till now had the awful truth been clear to her, and now it came with an appalling shock, and with the passionate keenness of youth, she imagined that her mother would be taken from her then and there, and she jealously counted the moments

of which Colonel Greville's interview was robbing her.

Left alone with Mrs. Gaveston, he grew painfully nervous. That which had seemed easy in idea became difficult in execution. All his happiness was at stake, and when he came to face the fact that he was going to ask a mother—many years younger than himself—leave to woo her daughter, a girl of seventeen, the words died in his throat.

Mrs. Gaveston saw and pitied his agitation; she had read his secret long ago.

"*Amico,*" said she, laying her small, transparent hand on his brown, muscular one, "I think I know what it is that you would say. Will you not tell it me?"

"Mrs. Gaveston, I love your daughter," he abruptly said.

"I know you do," was the quiet answer.

"You know it, and you do not disapprove? You consent?" he eagerly exclaimed.

"I cannot disapprove of one whom I so highly esteem, and Philip loved you; but the consent lies with Eveline. I wish that she were older, for your sake."

"Rather say, would that I were younger,"

he cried, bitterly. "Is it not ever before me? Yet no one, be his years what they may, can love her as I do. Only give her to me, and every hour of my life shall be devoted to her —shall be passed in securing her happiness."

"I am sure of it," said Mrs. Gaveston, in a kind, soothing voice, "and to no one would I more confidently entrust my child's happiness. And after all, you look,"—she smiled as she looked at the tower of strength before her— "you look as if you would be a hale, strong man forty years hence! And besides, dear friend, my days are few now, and Aunt Mary is old; and if for *your* sake, I wish your ages were nearer, for *hers* I can be only too grateful to think I leave her in such hands."

"God bless you for your goodness," he fervently said, "you may trust me."

"I feel it. But will you promise me one thing, that if ever she wishes to come to the true faith, that you will not hinder her? I have never spoken about it to her—I promised not—but, oh! I *have* so prayed for her! I *do*, I *shall* so pray for her—pray that we may meet in Heaven, and oh! promise you will not hinder her!" She sat up, clasping

his hand, her large, lustrous black eyes gazing pitifully into his. "And you, too," she continued, with a sudden consciousness of selfish forgetfulness of him, "she will teach you the truth, and then we shall all meet again."

"I trust in God we shall," he replied solemnly, "and I promise you that I will never thwart her religious feelings."

Mrs. Gaveston sank back on her pillows, murmuring some words in Italian.

She was much exhausted, and Greville, with all the tenderness of a man in a sick room, gently raised her head, gave her some restorative, smoothed her pillows, and then sat by her side chafing the little hand that lay like the petal of a lily, and scarce larger, in his broad palm.

Where do these strong, powerful men learn to be such tender nurses? Their very strength seems to impart the gentleness which a woman's arm so often lacks?

"May I crave another boon at your hands?" he said, when she was somewhat recovered, "and that is, that you will let me plead my own cause with Eveline. Let me try and win

her love by myself, and not owe it to your influence."

"As you please, my friend; but I think that you are wrong. Eveline is so—" young, she was about to say, but with the ready tact of a foreigner she substituted—"so unversed in such things, that your feelings for her will never present themselves to her mind. All her life she has been taught to regard you as a friend, and as such to love you dearly, and I fear that she will not understand you."

But Greville was resolute on this point, and the mother yielded.

Days grew into weeks, but Greville advanced no further in his suit. Never was lover more devoted, more tender; but far from appreciating, Eveline rather shrank from the change; it was unnatural to her—almost unseemly—that her venerable guardian should be the slave of her slightest word; indeed, it almost provoked her into telling him of it, for the thought that he was seeking her for his wife never for a moment occurred to her; so, thus completely at cross purposes, the weeks slipped by.

Mrs. Gaveston saw with distress how fruit-

less was his suit, and knew that if he pressed it, Eveline would unequivocally reject him. Bound by her promise, she said nothing at first, but feeling ere long that her very hours were numbered, she resolved to speak to her child; for the thought of leaving her alone in the world was more than she could bear. Her sweet, gentle Eveline who had never had a trouble, nor heard a harsh word—ah! she could never be left to the tender mercies of the world! and if she did not marry Greville what would become of her when Aunt Mary was gone? It had been a cold, cruel world to Mrs. Gaveston, and Greville alone had stood between her and God only knew what miseries, and she felt sure that if she imparted to her child certain facts which had come to her own knowledge, the flood-gates of her gratitude, if not of her love, would be opened, and she knew her generous nature so well, that she had little doubt of her answer when she learnt that she could requite by the gift of her hand the immeasurable kindness they had both received from Greville.

October had set in with incessant rain, and heavy south-west gales; trying weather to most,

but especially so to the weak and suffering. Mrs. Gaveston had latterly been unable to leave her bed; death was coming gently, but very fast now.

It was a wild evening towards the end of the month, and Eveline, who rarely left her mother, was sitting by her side, their heads on one pillow close together.

The tears silently ran from her eyes, but she was very quiet. Not so the night without. The wind in angry gusts drove the pouring rain shivering against the windows, and then lulling for a moment to gather fresh force, rushed madly among the trees, wreaking its fury on those which stood alone and unprotected, as a heavy "thud" more than once could tell. Satiated for a moment, and appalled, like a living thing, at the ruin it had caused, again it paused, but only to come with wilder violence on the house, threatening to break in the casements in its wrath at the obstacle it met with.

"What a fearful night!" said Eveline, with a shudder, and, drawing closer to her mother, who putting up her hand to caress her child's cheek, found it wet with tears.

"Eveline, my precious child, what is it? *Anima mia*, what is it?

"Oh, mother, mother!" sobbed Eveline, "it breaks my heart to see you so ill, to find that nothing does you good. Ah! *Madre*! don't leave your child!"

"Hush, hush, my dear one," said her mother tenderly. "It *is* hard to part, but even harder for me, to whom you are so precious, to think that I leave you with no one to care for you. There is dear Aunt Mary, and she loves you almost as well as I do, but she is old and feeble."

"Aunt Mary too," said Eveline in a quivering voice, "is *she* dying? Oh, mother! take me with you!"

"*Tace, carina, tace*," said Mrs. Gaveston finally. "I do not say our precious Aunt Mary is dying, but for a year past I have seen that she is breaking very much, and the thought of leaving you, my only one, in the sad world all alone, is worse, far worse, than death to me. But, my own, there is one," and she continued nervously, for she knew the shock that her child would feel, "there is one who loves you better than his life, and in

whose hands I would—ah! how gladly—confide you. Eveline, will you be his wife?"

"His wife? Whose wife?" asked the girl, amazed.

"Colonel Greville's."

"Colonel Greville's? My guardian?" said Eveline, thinking that she could not have heard right.

"Why not, my child?"

"Oh! mother, he might be my grandfather!"

"He is only forty, after all."

"Forty-*three*," corrected seventeen. "I love my guardian very dearly; I will be grateful to him all my life; I will be a daughter to him as long as I live—but I cannot marry him."

"Why not, dearest?"

"I do not know, mamma; I do not know *why* myself, but some inner voice tells me that such a marriage is impossible."

There was silence for a time, which Eveline broke.

"Mother, darling, Colonel Greville has often told me of the love that you bore my father; that there was nothing in the world that you

would not gladly have borne for him; that you did forsake father, mother, country, for him. Do you think that I would give up one single hour of *you* for the love of all the Colonel Grevilles in the world? I could not love any one *better* than you, my own mother, but I should like to love my husband as *well.*"

"Can you not trust me, my child? Can you not believe that I would only advise you for what I know is for your own welfare and happiness? Child, child, be guided by me."

"In all but *this*, but in this I *cannot.* Do not be vexed with me," she pleaded, on seeing her mother turn her head wearily away.

"I am not vexed, but I wish that it were possible for you to see with my eyes."

There was a long silence, which Mrs. Gaveston broke.

"Eveline, listen to me. I have not spoken to you about our affairs, for I know how the truth would chafe you, but I must tell you now. When your dear father was taken from me, you and I were left alone in the world. I had offended my own family by my marriage,

and they discarded me; your father was equally repudiated by his family, and I was left a widow not much older than you are now, with you—an infant—friendless and alone, or should have been but for Colonel Greville; and but for him we should have been penniless. For fifteen years he has been our true and steadfast friend; and a mere chance revealed to me that the income on which we have been living—that our every comfort and every luxury have come from him. I was such a mere child when he brought me here—I understood but little of business matters—and I naturally believed that the money which was paid me half-yearly came from your father's property, for he was rich when we were married. Colonel Greville offered to arrange all my business affairs for me, and I gratefully accepted his offer, little thinking that he was generously giving us from his own resources, and that I—that you—have not a farthing but the pension paid by the country."

"When did you learn all this, mother?" asked Eveline, in a low voice.

"About two months ago. I received a

letter from Colonel Greville's lawyer. I could not understand it, and showed it to Father Clement. He was going to London ; he saw the lawyer and found out the truth. The letter had been misdirected to me. It was for Colonel Greville. Not even Aunt Mary knows it ; and I little thought when I shared expenses with her that I was giving her her brother's money—or that when I died that you would be left without a farthing. Am I not right in saying that he is a generous, noble-minded man, to whom a woman may well confide her happiness ? And remember, this was not done of late, but fifteen years ago, when you were a baby, and when he was engaged to a girl who jilted him in the most heartless way for a richer man."

"What a wicked woman !" exclaimed Eveline. "He was hardly a loser."

"He thought differently, and it was this that drove him an alien from his country for so many years."

"Does he know that this has come to your knowledge ?" asked Eveline.

"What ? about the sorrow of his early years ?"

"No, no—the other thing—his money—his *charity*."

"No! God forbid that he should! Nothing would wound him so deeply; but do not call it—*charity*—in that bitter voice; it was given in love, let it be taken in love."

"Ah, mother, I shall never be such an angel as you are. But you say right. It would truly pain his generous nature did he know that his tender kindness has been discovered by us."

"Don't you think he deserves the only return we can make him, Eveline?"

"Does *he* want to marry me?" asked she, but her voice had lost its musical ring.

"I have thought it a long time, and a month ago he told me so."

"Did he bid you tell me?" asked Eveline, quickly.

"On the contrary, he begged me not; he said that he wished to win your love himself, and to owe his happiness to you alone, and not to my influence: he asked my permission to try and win that love. I have more than once besought him to let me speak to you, but he has invariably answered that he would

not have you coerced—that though your love would be more than life to him, unless it were given freely, of your own will, he would rather lay that life at your feet."

"That was noble of him, mother."

"It was, in truth! Oh! Eveline, do not scorn the love of such a man. If you do not love him now, as you think you *could* love, believe me, my child, that it will come, and that no wife will be happier than you if you marry him; and remember, too, how happy you can make him. Darling, for *my* sake."

There was a piteous entreaty on the poor wasted face—in the weak, tremulous voice.

Eveline drew her mother's head on her bosom, and kissed the weary eyelids, so soon to close in their last long sleep. Braced by a strong and generous resolution, her young heart nerved itself to its pious task, and it was in a quiet steady voice that she said—

"You did well to tell me, mother. How you felt towards my father, I cannot know, but I will marry Colonel Greville, and promise to be gentle, grateful, and kind to him as long as I live."

"Thank God for this!" said the invalid, in

a voice of intense relief; "and, Eveline, swear to me—your dying mother—before the throne of Heaven—that nothing—no one—shall ever shake your loyalty to your husband."

The dying woman raised herself from her daughter's arms, and looked her full in the face, with feverish eagerness in the large black eyes and on the quivering lips. It seemed as if a vista of future dangers and shoals, which have shipwrecked so many lives, rose up before her and spoke out in her agonised face. What if the consent that she had so earnestly sought should bring about her child's misery?

Eveline's calm, clear blue orbs met her mother's frantic gaze with the pure, steady look of childlike integrity.

"Mother, even as you were loyal to your husband, so will I be to mine."

A sigh of intense relief—a relaxing of the features—and the dying mother's head sank softly back in her daughter's arms, and ere long—worn out and exhausted—she slept.

Eveline softly laid the weary head on the pillow, and sat by her side, her face buried in her hands—regardless of time—of the furious

tempest outside—of all outer things. Her young heart was crushed: the mother she loved so dearly was dying—Aunt Mary, old and breaking—and she herself to be the wife of her guardian. She shuddered as she thought of it.

"Better earn my bread than that!" she exclaimed, half aloud. Startled at her own voice, she turned to her mother, fearing that she had disturbed her, but she slept peacefully on, murmuring in her sleep—

"My child, I can die in peace, now; God bless you, my child!"

The words came like a reproach to the poor girl, who sank on her knees by the bedside.

The fire burnt low, and cast a dull, red glow into the room—the storm raged on—but Eveline never moved till the opening of the door roused her.

It was Mrs. Dacres, who, startled at the intense silence, walked quickly up to the bed.

"Hush! she sleeps!" said Eveline.

"And how peacefully," said the other, reassured from her first alarm. "How calm and happy her dear face looks! Dear child,

if you will go down, I will keep watch here. My brother looks so dull and unhappy—will you go and cheer him a little ?"

Eveline looked quickly at the speaker, but the old lady's sweet face was as placid as ever, and as innocent of anything like plotting as a baby's. In truth, she never guessed her brother's feelings towards the child she had reared.

Eveline did her justice in a moment, and with the quick contrition that ever followed her most trifling fault, she kissed the withered cheek fondly, mutely asking pardon for having suspected her. She noiselessly replenished the fire, bent once more over her sleeping mother, gently kissed the wan forehead, and then sought her own room.

She bathed her face, smoothed her hair, and then knelt down for a few minutes in earnest prayer. When she rose from her knees there was a calm, holy, but resolute expression on her young face that had not been there half-an-hour ago.

She went down to the drawing-room, very unlike a young girl about to meet her lover ;

her heart was sick within her, and her hand trembled as she opened the door.

"Is she worse to-night?" asked Greville, rising to meet her.

"She is sleeping now," was all that she could trust her voice to say as she sank wearily on the sofa.

"Is Mary with her?" he asked, coming over to her and leaning his elbow on the corner of the mantelpiece.

"Yes."

No word was spoken for some minutes. Eveline took some work from the table, and tried to occupy herself.

The tempest went raging on, and an awful gust seemed to make the house tremble.

"What a fearful night!" said she, shuddering, scarce less at the storm than at the silence which was becoming unbearable.

Her companion heard her not; the tumult in his own breast drowned all other sounds. He was gazing down on her with passionate yearning, yet unable to utter one word. Often had he been near to speaking all that filled his soul, and had as often refrained—

the intensity of his affection made him timid.

What would not some women have given for such love as this? Why there were those who would have knelt at his feet for a tithe of what he lavished on this girl who shrank from it, so strange are love's mysteries.

"Eveline!"

It was coming now—she felt it—she knew it. Her hands fell on her lap and closed nervously, like one striving to bear a great pain without a murmur.

"Eveline!" he said again, his voice tremulous and husky with emotion.

The golden head drooped low, but there was no answer. Had she spoken it would have been a shriek.

Encouraged by her silence, he knelt at her feet, and taking her hands in his, strove to look in her face.

She slowly raised her head, but the hard white rigid face which met his so shocked him that he started to his feet.

"Good God! Eveline, what is it?"

Her white lips moved, but no sound came from them; then the scene at her mother's

bedside came vividly before her, and she burst into a passion of tears.

"She is dying! oh! my mother!"

"My poor child! My precious one!" said he, sitting down by her side, and gathering her in his arms as he would a suffering child. He drew her head on his breast, his black beard mingling with her golden curls. He longed to pour out in burning words the love that shook his very soul, but with a strong effort he kept them back, and let her "rain out the heavy mist of tears," gently smoothing her head and pressing it closer to him, uttering a fond epithet now and then, till, soothed by his sympathy, she grew calmer.

"How kind and good he is to me! Ah! I will love him dearly," and, as she thought it she pressed almost imperceptibly closer to him. It was the tiniest little caress, but love is quick, and he felt it, and a great thrill went through him.

He had often thought over what he would say when this delicious moment came, but, of course, every word went from him. Who ever remembered in a moment of passion the eloquent speech so often rehearsed in private

—the speech that was to carry everything before it—to find its way to the very depths of the heart? Such speeches may, and often do, beguile our lonely hours, but I don't think they have any other result.

Greville's arms tightened round her, and "Eveline, my own darling, will you be my wife—more loved than ever wife was before?" was all he said—no word of his love, his adoration of her.

"Look at me, darling; tell me, will you make me happy?" and he gently raised the flushed face to his.

Her truthful eyes did not flinch.

"Shall I really make you happy—happier than you now are?" she whispered.

What need to record his answer?

When Eveline went to her mother that night, she had her reward in the fervent words of gratitude and thankfulness that the invalid poured out, in the fervour of the blessing that she invoked on her child as she clasped her in her arms. Eveline did not leave her that night; the usual attendant was sent to her own room, and the child kept watch over the mother.

In accordance with Mrs. Gaveston's wish, the marriage took place at once. She was sinking very fast, and her one desire seemed to be only to live long enough to see her child in safe hands.

Eveline was too oppressed with grief to care what was done in the matter; she was quite passive, and let Colonel Greville arrange everything as he chose. She never left her mother's bedside, and was thus spared the trial of being left alone with her lover—a trial that she felt would be more than she could endure.

It was a sad and mournful wedding which took place a few days after the foregoing conversation. No one was present but Mrs. Dacres and the clergyman's wife who had vainly striven to induct Eveline into the mysteries of housekeeping. No bells were rung, for who could say when the marriage peal would have to be changed for the funeral knell?

Quietly the little party walked back to the cottage to resume their watch by the dying mother. She was very calm and peaceful now, very tranquil, and two days after the

marriage the end came. The priest bade every one leave the room ; one lingering kiss between mother and child, and Colonel Greville bore his fainting wife from the room.

CHAPTER IX.

"Oh woman! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please;
* * * * *
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou!"

SCOTT.

EVELINE was so shaken by her mother's death and that of Mrs. Dacres', who, catching cold at the funeral, was taken ill and died very suddenly, that it was some time before Colonel Greville could take her from the scene of so much sorrow.

When she was sufficiently recovered to bear the journey, he took her to Italy, and neither of them having any living ties in England, they made no fixed place of abode anywhere, but wandered about for the first few years of their married life wherever their

—or more properly speaking, her—fancy took them; her fresh, keen enjoyment possessing endless charm for one who only lived to gratify his young wife, and blessed with ample means he indulged her every wish.

And Eveline—was she happy? I may safely aver that she was; not with the wild, passionate happiness that comes to so many for a brief period, and is lasting to so *very* few, but happy with a quiet, tender, grateful affection; and if at times he yearned for something more, on the whole he was well content and very proud of his wife, whose girlish beauty and talents had developed beyond all expectation, and who, all unconsciously to herself, commanded universal admiration wherever they went. But nothing could change the pure, simple nature, nor spoil the childlike innocence which had, from the first, so captivated Colonel Greville. Living much in men's society (for Greville cared little for the companionship of any woman but that of his own wife) had given a higher tone to her intellect; for with all deference to my own sex, I do think that we are raised from much that is small, narrow-

minded, and unworthy of us, by the companionship of gentlemen—gentlemen in the true acceptation of the word, and none other could claim intimacy with Greville. I am far from thinking or saying that men are god-like heroes or "monsters the world ne'er saw;" it is no question of whether their faults and virtues or ours are the greatest—they are different faults and virtues; and the former are, for the most part, kept out of our sight; and if we soften their sterner natures and lead them more or less to holier things, they teach us a wider charity, a higher sense of honour, a keener love of truth—ay, and a greater purity of mind and taste than we are apt to learn among ourselves.

I can fancy the storm that I shall incur for so bold an assertion, but I am an old woman now, and speak with the knowledge of long years and wide experience in all classes. Let any pure minded woman ask herself if in men's society she has ever heard the remarks —the ideas—the conversations—that obtain in female coteries, or in a *tête-à-tête* with a friend of her own sex? Doubtless I shall be answered (for we are not logical), "And what

may men's conversation be among themselves?"

I neither know nor wish to know. Possibly not fit for our ears; but if so, it is never brought before us. *We* only see the best side of their nature, just as *they* see the best of ours. Let us mutually profit.

That Eveline Greville was surrounded by admirers, none can doubt, but her childlike purity was in a measure its own safeguard, to say nothing of her husband's devotion, which took heed that no shoals nor breakers should cross his darling's path.

Hers was a loyal nature, and though scarce more than a child when she gave her mother the solemn promise that she had asked, never for a moment had her heart wavered in its truth and integrity to the husband, whom, nearly thirty years her senior, she had married from a sense of duty and gratitude; nor had the possibility of caring for any other than the kind, generous man, who had trusted his happiness to her keeping—nor even of wishing him younger or different to what he was—ever crossed her loyal mind.

In after years how often did Eveline think

of what her husband had been to her, how his loving care had kept all dangers from her! how bitterly did she wail over the meagre affection and gratitude that she had given him! for it was in these after years that she learnt too truly that she had given him silver for his gold—pure and abundant it is true—but still not gold. But the knowledge came too late, as self-reproach so often does, when we would give all we possess but for *one* hour in which to make amends—that one hour which nothing can give back! But the Grevilles were happy, ay, happier than many who have married with wild, passionate love throbbing in either heart, and who have started on their life's journey with colours flying and drums beating. How long does that golden dream last? How long ere sharp, cutting words are spoken, regardless of the pain they inflict? They are forgiven at first, but too soon do—

> "Ruder words again rush in,
> To spread the breach that words begin,
> Till fast departing one by one,
> The sweetnesses of love are gone;"

and thus does temper—that domestic curse—lay the foundation of the wretched barrier

which, too often, rises between hearts that once have loved, but now are parted for evermore.

The outward tie binds them still, but what is that worth, when the sweet inward link is broken? But this is a digression. To return to the Grevilles. They were in Rome, when some business summoned them to England. In the hurried journey—what caused it, who can tell? but Greville, the strong, hale man, whose iron frame had been proof against all illness and privations, was struck down by paralysis.

We will not dwell on that painful time, nor how, after long and anxious watching, the invalid was brought by easy stages to London, where Mrs. Greville had written to an old friend of her husband's to procure them a house, "a bright, sunny situation," wrote she. "I do not know London, so leave it all to you —spare no expense, and please have everything ready for us. I know that I need offer no apology to so true a friend as you are."

Robert Challenor did her bidding, got a house ready in Park Lane, and then went over to Paris, to help in bringing back his old friend.

It was a piteous thing to see the once powerful man—a very tower of strength—reduced to worse than the helplessness of a child (for he had lost the use of his limbs), and looking to his fragile young wife for support.

He bore his terrible fate bravely and patiently, as most men do bear the inevitable; and dear as he always had been to his wife, he was tenfold dearer now; prized as all things are prized, when we see them slipping from our grasp. Whatever her grief, she was always cheerful with him; her spirit was never out of tune; she guessed his slightest wish before it was uttered; she was never without a fund of news—Heaven only knows how collected, for she never left him—wherewith to amuse him.

She alone could soothe the irritability caused by his malady—she would draw the poor, weary head on her bosom, and whisper fond, caressing words as a mother to her child; she would sing to him for hours;—nothing wearied her;—nothing shook the loving patience with which she met his every whim or caprice.

He could not endure her to be out of his sight

for a moment—she was his sunshine—his one pleasure ; and if his friends sometimes thought him exigeant where she was concerned, she rejoiced at being able to requite in some measure all that he had done for her and for her mother.

Mr. Challenor, a man of some eminence in the political world, became a frequent visitor, and always a welcome one, to the invalid. They had been school-fellows ; they had travelled together ; they had shot elephants—side by side—in Africa ; they had visited together most of the cities of Europe ; in short they were fast friends, and few people stood as high in Greville's estimation as Robert Challenor.

Mrs. Challenor was very different to her husband, Greville could not endure her, he said that she grated him all over. She was a cold, hard, ambitious woman, but had conceived a real affection for Eveline, whose unremitting care of her invalid husband won her admiration, for she could be a staunch friend, though sometimes a bitter enemy.

But with the captiousness of an invalid, Greville said one day after a visit from her :

"She sets my teeth on edge—I cannot stand

her. Don't let her come near me any more. What on earth Challenor saw in her, passes my comprehension."

"Let us hope, for his sake, that there is more than meets the eye," said Eveline, laughing; "but I must agree that they do seem a *mal-assorti* couple, reminding one of the Dutch philosophy of two wrong halves coming together by accident. Still I do think that her ambition for him acts as a spur. His speech last night in the House is very clever. Let me read it you; you ought to know something of it before he pays you his evening visit."

From this it may be inferred that Challenor did not neglect his old friend, to whom he was truly attached; but I will not vouch that he did not carry away with him recollections of a sweet, gentle face, a soft, womanly manner, and a low-toned silvery voice—"a most excellent thing in woman"—that discussed his speeches with him, and questioned his opinions with an audacity that, coming from such lovely lips, enchanted him, and made Greville laugh. And often on his way to the House, after one of these visits, it seemed to him that before him floated a figure of matchless symmetry,

draped in some soft material that never rustled, and which owned a face of heavenly beauty ; and he would wonder whether, tended by such an angel, *he* could not be as patient as Greville.

Dangerous speculations.

CHAPTER X.

"He faded, and so calm and meek,
So softly wan, so sweetly weak,
So tearless, yet so tender, kind,
And grieved for those he left behind!
And not a word of murmur—not
A groan o'er his untimely lot."

BYRON.

Two years passed on without any improvement in Colonel Greville's state; he was, in fact, slowly sinking.

It had been an oppressingly hot day in July, such a day as makes one long to be out of town, breathing sweet country scents. The sun was setting as he only sets in London—a great globe of fire, looming out of a purple mist. The trees were parched and dusty—the grass burnt—all nature hot and panting, except the paralysed man whose chair had been wheeled to the window that he might

enjoy the last rays from the west. Hot as the day was, a warm shawl was wrapped about his knees, and a fire smouldered in the grate, ready at any moment to be roused into a blaze, but he nevertheless looked cold and pinched as he lay back in his chair. The long, black beard, once his pride, was shaven off, and there was nothing to hide the ravages of illness; the mouth was drawn; the large black eyes had sunk into deep caverns, hollowed out by suffering; it was a painful wreck of the once stalwart man, of whom Mrs. Gaveston had said, only six years before, that forty years could hardly change him.

Eveline was kneeling by his side, his arm was round her neck—held there by her warm, soft clasp—while his eyes were fixed with that far-away look peculiar to those who know that they are dying. Who that has seen that look has ever forgotten it? What is it seeing? Any visible presence apparent only to those about to quit the world? God knows.

He had gazed thus so long that Eveline, alarmed, drew his wasted hand closer to her cheek. The mute caress recalled him to earth, and her. A smile, if ought so anxious, so pain-

ful, so mournful, could be called one, passed over his face.

"My precious one!" said he, turning to her, "what will become of you when I am gone?"

"Arthur," she whispered, drawing closer to him, "are you feeling worse?"

"No, my child; better I think; only I am very cold."

She got up, closed the window, made up the fire, wheeled his chair close to it, and rang for some tea, the one thing that he liked.

The butler announced Mr. Challenor as he brought in the tray.

"Ah! I am glad to see you," said the invalid; "we were getting a little dull, and wanted some one to cheer us."

Robert Challenor was a middle-aged man of moderate height, very slight and spare of figure, as most men are who work their brains much: his face was decidedly hard favoured, but redeemed by a good, square overhanging forehead, with a chin to match, both betokening a firm, resolute character, which his friends said his private life belied, as he was never known to hold his own by the domestic fireside. His voice was his charm; low and

gentle, but so deep, full-toned and sonorous that one wondered where the lungs were that gave forth that deep diapason.

From long control of his feelings he had gained a calm, almost a cold, exterior; and none would have guessed from the outward man that beneath lay an intense, passionate nature. Mount Etna at rest looks cold and hard enough on the outside.

"What, no House to-night?" said Eveline, trying to speak cheerfully.

"Saturday," said he, shaking hands; "and how are you to-night, Greville?"

A slight shake of the head, and the shadow of a smile, was all the answer he gave—an answer he did not intend his wife to see; but her quick eye caught the signal, and she turned to the tea-table to hide the sudden tears and trembling lip; then rallying, as though dreading to hear her fears confirmed, she said in a voice she strove to render steady,

"I am afraid I let him sit too long by the open window, and he is a little chilled," (the thermometer stood at eighty), she glanced at Challenor with an appealing look as though beseeching comfort from him.

He turned to the fire, for that look was more than he could stand, and uttered some *banalité* about English evenings.

Greville, in the tenderness of his great love, could not bear to see her sad, and he said cheerfully, so as to rouse them all,

"We have been reading your speech of last night, and my little Tory wife was quite eloquent in her anger with you."

"*Les absens, &c.,*" replied Challenor, smiling, "but in what have I fallen under your displeasure, fair lady?"

"In that you are doing no good and much eventual harm by your so-called Liberal measures," retorted Eveline, as she brought the tea to her husband, and stood between him and the other, so that he should not see that she had to raise the cup to the invalid's lips. Always tender and thoughtful for him, she was jealous that any one should see his utter helplessness.

"A sweeping accusation!" laughed Challenor.

"I do call it class legislation when every measure you pass is to benefit the shopkeepers: what Napoleon said in irony is fast becoming

true," responded Eveline, warming on the theme.

"Now let me convince you," began Challenor.

"You won't convince me, though you may beat me in argument," she replied playfully.

"Are women ever convinced by argument?" said Greville, somewhat restored by the tea.

"I am not sure about arguments," she answered; "it seems to me that the end of all arguments is to leave people where they began, 'of the same opinion still,' but instinct tells *us* when we are right without arguing."

"Ah, that instinct," smiled Challenor, "it is a marvellous faculty, but far too subtle for our masculine comprehension."

"Now you are laughing at me; but don't suppose that women can't reason. We can, I assure you; only seeing the results quickly, it saves time to step across the diameter, instead of accompanying you slowly round the circle, and that always puzzles a man."

"Well, it is wonderful how you ladies jump to conclusions."

"And right ones, acknowledge!" insisted Eveline.

"Sometimes," conceded Challenor, with a smile; "but I am not prepared to say how such impulsive legislation would answer in governing the country."

"I should be sorry to see women governing the country," replied Mrs. Greville, laughing, "but I do think that we could often prophesy the results of your policy."

"Inasmuch?"

"Inasmuch," she continued, undaunted, "that your endeavours to do away with class will lower the tone of society and will create a feeling of discontent, to say nothing of rebellion, in the very class that you wish to raise."

"I deny wishing to abolish the distinction of class, but I should like the distinction to arise from moral and intellectual sources, rather than from the accident of birth."

"Do you then count ancient lineage, honourable descent, as *nothing?*" exclaimed Eveline.

"We all count to Adam," said Challenor.

"A truism; but I fancy you *do* take some count of your horse's pedigree," a little sarcastically, "and deem him more or less

valuable according to the blood he shows; yet doubtless there is an Adam in the equine history."

"Well answered. But still, why not give to men with intellects capable of the greatest improvement, facilities for rising? Why leave them in brutish ignorance simply because an accident has placed them in a lower rank? Let the upper classes raise themselves in the same ratio; let them use their greater opportunities to lift themselves in the moral and intellectual scale, and you will still keep the coveted distinction of class that you speak of."

"I am afraid that my pretty politician is fairly beat," said Colonel Greville.

"Not a bit!" she cried, "I could say a great deal on the necessity of the upper classes being born demigods, if they are to be superior to all others; that Lord A—— is born to a Marquisate, and countless acres—born a feudal Lord—but not a Pitt. That Lord B—'s lineage and immense wealth give him a decided position; he will never be a Socrates, *but always a gentleman*, which your clever shop-boy will *never* be—he hasn't the instinct

of one. He may be a great genius, but he will never cease to feel bitter and sore at his 'accident of birth,' and because he cannot belong to a higher sphere will only care to demolish it; and yet I believe that that very man would gladly change places with Lord A—— or Lord B——, intellect and all. I could say a great deal, but I will be merciful, and give you music instead of politics."

She sat down to the piano, and, after striking a few chords, wandered into some recollections of Mozart, and presently her rich full voice rose in the glorious strain of the *Agnus Dei* of the Twelfth Mass.

Not a word was uttered when she ended, but the hushed silence was the highest tribute that she could have received. She came forward, and, leaning over the back of her husband's chair, asked him if he remembered hearing it in the Vatican some years ago.

"It was more magnificent and impressive than I can say," she added turning to Challenor. "I can quite understand religious fervour and devotion being roused by such glorious music—by the solemnity that surrounds the Roman Catholic faith. Now, even

you," nodding her head playfully at Challenor, "even you—too reasonable to be carried away by imagination—were impressed just now by the beauty of that music, and yet there was but a piano and one voice; but when the grand tones of an organ and a whole chorus of human voices take up the strain, filling the air with music—ah! the heart aches with all it feels, and longs to feel!"

She spoke passionately, as she was apt to do on that theme.

How often in after days did Challenor recall her as he saw her then in all her womanly beauty, standing against the still red-lighted sky—her soft white dress hanging in long graceful folds about her—the slight delicate wrists and throat circled with plain gold—the rapt expression of her up-turned face.

She did not notice the silence that lasted for a few minutes, and then Challenor took his leave.

Once more alone together.

"Come nearer to me, my own," said Greville, looking back at her, as she leant over him; in a moment she was at his side on her

knees: "I feel very weary to-night," and he laid his head on her bosom.

She could not speak, but there was a mute eloquence in the clinging way in which she gathered him to her breast, as if she were protecting him from danger. It was very hard to die, and he felt it.

"No one will ever love you as I do, my darling," he said, with ineffable tenderness.

"I know it! I know it!" sobbed Eveline, her tears raining down fast: "oh! do not say you must leave me, my own!"

The dreaded fear was spoken, and all her self-control went from her; her head sank down on his shoulder, and she sobbed piteously.

The sight of her grief calmed him, and he strove to soothe her.

"Hush! my dearest one, I will not leave you if I can help it. It is a darksome journey to take without you, my best blessing."

His eyes sought hers with a yearning that went straight to her heart; she had not loved him as he had longed to be loved by her, she saw it—she felt it at last—and he was dying! Oh! that the past could be recalled! That

vain cry so many of us make when too late!

Their lips met in a long kiss, and he tried to fold her in his arms, but they fell powerless beside him; and a bitter wailing cry escaped him—a cry that went to her heart, and drawing his thin haggard cheek to her soft warm one, she sought to soothe him as a mother would her child, till, calm and peaceful, his head sank forward in one of those sudden sleeps that so truly tell of coming death.

He slept on, very quietly; she hardly dared breathe for fear of waking him; dreaded lest the beating of her heart, which throbbed louder every moment, should disturb him. Still he slept on. Would he never wake?

The shades were closing in; the firelight fell with fitful gleams on the surrounding objects, lending them, to her excited fancy, a weird and ghastly look; she could not reach the bell. She could not move, for she held him in her arms, and the head seemed to grow heavier every moment.

Was it all over? Kind heaven forbid!

She could scarce repress the shriek that

rose to her lips, when quietly and calmly he opened his eyes.

"My child! my Eveline!" he began, but the sentence was never finished.

Quick as thought she seized a restorative that stood always at hand, and tried to pour some down his throat, but a spasm drew his face, and the liquid ran from his distorted lips.

A shriek of anguish, and a rush to the bell; the violent peal brought several servants running into the room.

Poor Greville lay back, not dead, but speechless. Paralysis had again struck him, and for the last time.

In vain were the best physicians summoned —in vain all their skill. The King of Terrors had flapped his wings over his victim, and the chill had struck home—nor skill nor art could avail any more. The last summons had come, and he must go.

He lingered a day or two, and then died in his wife's arms; his loving eyes never leaving her, and mutely speaking the deep, tender, unvarying love that his tongue could no more tell.

The noble, generous heart was stilled. The voice that had never uttered a harsh word to her was silent for ever more. For he was dead.

Weep on, poor soul, weep on, for never again shalt thou have such a friend on earth, never again such a guarding, protecting love to come betwixt thee and earthly ill. Better if thou couldst die in that heavy swoon than wake to battle with the world, armed only with thy youth, thy beauty, thy marvellous fascination.

But death comes not because we deem it would be better. Eveline had her appointed race to run, and she lived.

For a time she was inconsolable, and in the sorrow of her heart cried out that she was desolate and alone.

Desolate and alone!

Have any of my readers ever felt what those words mean? God forbid! for they mean that the heart has become a desert, where nothing can ever live again, that an icy barrier stands betwixt it and all human sympathy, all comfort—they mean that a plague-spot is written thereon, like the mark

of Cain, warning all away from that black and dreary abyss.

Desolate and alone! Bereft of human succour, and worst of all, bereft of inward help.

Are all those suicides really insane on whom that verdict is passed? Forsaken of man, deeming they are forsaken of God ("the fool saith in his heart, there is no God,") who knows what horrible blank despair, sapping the last vestige of courage—a despair that is not madness, for consciousness is left—may have bowed down those unhappy ones who think to end all with their earthly woes?

Let us never talk of being alone and desolate so long as we can lift the heart upwards and feel that there is One above, who, though we come not to Him till every tie is riven, every earthly hope exhausted, will not reject us, nor refuse to bind up the broken heart, though we come to Him *last of all.*

Ah, me! how idly we use words sometimes!

Mrs. Greville had gone down to her Welsh cottage for her husband's funeral, and she remained there. It was her childhood's home,

a place rendered doubly sacred now, for there slept all whom she had loved—mother, friend, and husband: and for many months, deaf to all entreaties, she shut herself up there with her grief. It was not good for her, for an apathy and morbid feeling were stealing over her.

He had died in July, and it was not till the fair spring-time had come round again, that a few very intimate friends were allowed to break in on her solitude. They did her good, and roused her to exertion, but she was vexed and angry with herself for forgetting *him* even for an hour; for like all young people, new to sorrow, she nursed and cherished it, feeling there was an infidelity to the dead in being happy, and in yielding to genial influences around.

But youth will assert its blessed supremacy. If its passions are keener, they are shorter lived, their very intensity destroys them. The fiercer the fire, the quicker it burns out. 'Tis the law of nature, and the chains of grief will glide off the young heart, and leave it unfettered, without any effort of its own.

It is only as we grow older, and feel only

too well that we *cannot* forget, that we struggle to do so—struggle to put from us the cruel, aching pain, that we cannot get rid of, that no opiate can soothe, no pleasure beguile. The phantom of past happiness—a happiness that perhaps we have murdered by our own acts—stands in retributive memory before us, defying us to put away remembrance.

We may smile, and laugh, and mix freely with our fellow-men, but the spectre never leaves us. Woe is me! there is no "fabled stream" for us who have outlived our youth, but not our sorrows. There is no earthly future—no more rebounding into the realms of earthly hope for us;

> "No clothing of the palpable and the familiar,
> With golden exhalations of the dawn."

Our dawn has fled—our night has come,

> "And though the eye may sparkle still, 'tis where the ice appears:
> Though wit may flow from fluent lips, and mirth distract the breast
> Through midnight hours that yield no more their former hope of rest,
> 'Tis but as ivy leaves around the ruined turret wreath,
> All green and wildly fresh without, but worn and gray beneath."

CHAPTER XI.

"Le plus grand effort de l'amitié n'est pas de montrer nos defauts à un ami, c'est de lui faire part des siens."

ROCHEFOUCAULD.

MORE than eighteen months had glided by since Colonel Greville's death, and his widow was still at the cottage which Mrs. Dacres had many years before settled on the child she had loved so well.

Mrs. Greville was very rich, for her husband had left her everything, and she was thus enabled to carry out many benevolent schemes in a neighbourhood that was endeared to her by all the sweet associations of childhood; and in promoting the happiness of others—in relieving and consoling the sick and the poor—her mind recovered its natural healthy tone; and as there was endless occupation in the im-

provement of her little property, and in cultivating talents with which she was richly gifted, and which had amply repaid the care bestowed on them by her adoring husband, her life, if quiet, was a very happy one, and far from dull.

A few intimate friends occasionally visited her, but no one had been able to lure her from her retirement,

Her most frequent guest was Lady Pamela Lorton, the eldest daughter of Lord Okehampton. Though utterly dissimilar, a very warm friendship had sprung up between them, and there was just that slight relationship which is counted or ignored, according to the amount of liking or disliking that is mutually entertained ; and as Lady Pamela's mother was sister to the present Earl of Pierrepoint, there were sufficient grounds for calling themselves cousins.

Mr. and Mrs. Challenor had also been to see her, conjugally, once or twice ; but he, who sat for a borough in South Wales, found of late that his constituents wanted much looking after, and likewise discovered that if not the nearest, the pleasantest route was by Llan-

fenydd, and so it came to pass that the little inn often had the honour of putting up the member for ——.

Mrs. Greville used to laugh at the solicitude that he displayed for his supporters, and would playfully ask him if he expected a dissolution that he was so often among them, little dreaming what was the attraction that brought him that way, for never by word nor look had he betrayed himself.

Quiet, calm almost to coldness in appearance, he was about the last man any one would have supposed capable of becoming the slave of an engrossing passion, and yet he loved Eveline Greville with a mad, hopeless love—hopeless, for it was not possible for him, who knew her so well, to misconstrue her gentle, kindly friendship ; and the knowledge that the first wild word from him would be his sentence of banishment, had hitherto kept his lips sealed, but not without a struggle—a struggle so great, that he would often take his farewell in so cold and formal a manner, that Mrs. Greville was inclined to pity the wife of one who, if clever, was very hard and reserved ; and when she heard Mrs.

Challenor found fault with as being so void of sensibility, she invariably took her part, feeling that it was no wonder, considering the hard, callous nature with which she was mated; but those who could have seen him in the solitude of his chamber after one of those partings that had called forth this judgment would have given a very different verdict.

His head buried in his arms, his whole frame shaken, he would resolve never again to see the woman he loved, until he could look on her sweet face unmoved, but

> "Weak and irresolute is man,
> The purpose of to-day,
> Woven with pains into his plan,
> To-morrow rends away."

And so, though each time that he left the cottage he said it should be for the last time, it never was the last.

January had come round again, and Mrs. Challenor, having gone to spend some time with a sister, her husband took the opportunity of running down to see how Mrs. Greville's schools were progressing—schools in which he took great interest, though Eveline's principles and his were at utter variance—she

holding to what she called good old times, and making her scholars good simple Christians, and fitting them by a knowledge of housewifery and needlework to be helpmeets for men of their own class, while Challenor was all for a more extended education; but she would playfully tell him that she was monarch of all she surveyed, and would admit no traitors to spoil her Utopia.

Challenor, a good deal to his mortification, found Lady Pamela on this occasion at the cottage.

He had an instinctive feeling that she read him like a book, and that she might, at any moment impart such information to her friend as would put an end to visits which were the charm of his life.

Lady Pamela was the same age as Eveline, that is, about five-and-twenty, but twice her age in shrewd knowledge of the world. No two people could be more unlike. Where one was confiding, trustful, gentle, and essentially feminine, the other was suspicious, hard, taking nothing on trust, clever, and a thorough woman of the world; but she was very fond of Eveline, regarding her with a protect-

ing tenderness as one utterly unfit to take care of herself.

Nor were they less unlike in person than in mind. Lady Pamela was universally called handsome, but she was not really entitled to the appellation. Splendid brown eyes, a small head crowned with glossy black hair, the dazzling complexion of a young, healthy Englishwoman, and a figure round and beautiful as Hebe's, joined to a perfect knowledge of the toilette, was quite sufficient to give Lady Pamela Lorton the reputation of beauty, and indeed she was a very brilliant, striking woman. It would be difficult to imagine a greater contrast than that she presented to Eveline, who, delicately fair, with a complexion like the inside of a shell, almost too pure and transparent for health, and with a wealth of golden hair—that yellow, sparkling colour so rarely seen, except in children—which fell in soft natural curls around her white, swan-like throat, was as lovely a being as ever bewitched a poet's dream. Her large, wistful eyes of the deepest blue, were almost too beautiful, for in them was that look

> "Which shows, tho' wandering earthward now,
> Her spirit's home is in the skies above;"

but, richly fringed with long black lashes, and surmounted by delicately pencilled eyebrows, they could laugh as merrily as did the little rosy mouth—a veritable Cupid's bow—that broke into dimples whenever she smiled, showing a most lovely row of little pearls. Though taller and slighter than her cousin, her figure was rounded in the most beautiful proportions of mature womanhood, and those who had once seen her narrow arched instep and rounded ankle, or marked the matchless beauty of her arms and wrists, no longer wondered at the perfect grace of her every movement.

Such was Eveline Greville, as she sat at her writing-table with a heap of some asylum cards at her side, and on the floor a number of letters, she herself still occupied in running down the list of subscribers.

A blazing wood fire burnt on the hearth, near which reclined Lady Pamela in an easy-chair, a book and paper-cutter lying idly in her lap, as she watched her cousin with quaint wonderment.

"I tell you what, ma belle amie," said she, at last, "you will never get on in the world; you are too good-natured. Depend upon it, it don't answer. Amiable people always go to the wall. I don't say that the moral is unimpeachable, but the fact is."

"A propos de quoi, belle cousine?" said Eveline, keeping her finger on the last name she had been considering, but turning her head to Pamela; "I don't think that I have been guilty of any particular amiability lately that I deserve your censure."

"What do you call that?" retorted the other, pointing with the paper-cutter to the heap of large square letters, all of one size, that were scattered on the floor; "what return do you expect to get for that?"

"Well, the return of this orphan, I hope," said Eveline, taking up a card. "It is a sad case."

"My dear, there are heaps of sad cases in the world, and if you set about relieving them, you will find you will bring a hornet's nest about your ears."

"But surely, Pam—" began Eveline.

"But surely, Eve," interrupted the other,

"I would not take that trouble,"—nodding at the obnoxious letters—"for any one living. You go in for virtue being its own reward, but that's an obsolete idea, and does not hold now."

"I don't know about 'going in' for anything, but surely a quiet conscience is something."

"Undoubtedly," replied Pamela, "but I am quite sure that poring over those cards all the morning would give me anything but a quiet conscience. I should feel inclined to consign them and their cause to Jericho. I don't think I have a conscience—certainly it never troubles me."

"Pamela!" remonstrated Eveline.

"Do you wish me to have a bad conscience? that's uncharitable."

"I wish you would not be so sarcastic," said Eveline, folding another missive and adding it to the heap.

"Perhaps you do it for a penance," suggested Lady Pamela, looking towards the window as she reclined indolently in her chair; "you ought to subject yourself to some mor-

tification for inflicting tortures on that unfortunate wretch I see coming up the walk."

"Who is that?" said Eveline.

"I do love that little innocent voice," said the other, ironically. "Do you know that you have the making of a most thorough coquette in you, and of the worst order, too—the sentimental?"

"Ten votes. I wonder if I can get them," said Eveline, absently, and not listening to her cousin, though her eyes were unconsciously fixed upon her, as with one elbow resting on the table she was nibbling the end of her pen, calculating her chances on the matter before her.

"Now if my butterflies do singe the down on their wings," continued Pamela, "it may smart a little, but they are none the worse, and they come out as fresh as ever, while *you* stick a red-hot needle right in their—what is the thing they have?—thorax."

"What on earth are you talking of?" exclaimed Eveline, catching the last word.

"I was talking of your sins, and thinking of Mr. Challenor," retorted Pamela, "who *was* coming up the walk, but as he has not put in

an appearance yet, I suppose is taking a slight turn to compose his feelings; perhaps his speech."

"My dear child," said Eveline, laughing, "if you knew Mr. Challenor as well as I do, you would know that you are talking nonsense. I am very fond of him, and he has a friendly feeling for me because of old times; but as to his having a penchant for any woman living, it is perfectly absurd. I don't think," she said slowly, "he even cares much about his wife."

"Not unlikely. I don't know many who do."

Pamela took up her book, and Eveline her pen, no more disturbed than if she had been told that the figure of Pallas Athene on the top of that club in Pall Mall was inclined to like her.

"What brings Mr. Challenor here so often?" said Pamela, suddenly dropping her book in her lap.

"His constituents," said Eveline, quietly.

"Bah! M.P.'s don't care to be so much among them. But since when has this unpronounceable place sent a member?"

"You are quite incorrigible," returned Eveline, not deigning any further enlightenment.

"I have heard that the nearest way home is the long one round," replied Pamela, mischievously, "and doubtless this M.P. 'who doesn't even care much for his wife,' generally finds this the nearest way to his borough, though *I* should say it was some thirty miles round: but he has miscalculated to-day, for it has taken him half an hour to do what any less circumlocuting mortal would have done in five minutes. There he is."

A ring at the bell confirmed her words.

"One comfort, Eveline, I have in this is that *you* are heart whole."

Eveline turned round, her eyes flashing.

Pamela laughed, and the servant announced Mr. Challenor.

The next day Pamela was going home, having extracted a promise from her cousin that she would pay them a visit.

"Well, I confess I am anxious to see this cousin of ours who has won your hard heart," said Eveline.

Lady Pamela was engaged to Lord Gaveston.

"I am not 'all heart' like that dear old Jezebel in Dombey," replied Pamela, "in fact

I am not sure I have any; but Gaveston and I suit each other, we shan't quarrel, we are both good-tempered, he is too lazy to be anything else, and I generally remark that the people who have the fiercest quarrels are those who are said to love each other most."

"I cannot imagine being even angry with a person one loves," said Eveline.

"*I* can," was the response. "For a woman who I suppose has seen a good deal of the world, you are extraordinarily romantic."

"Strange as it may seem I have seen very little of the world. The first seventeen years of my life were spent in this very house, and my psychological studies were restricted to the villagers you have seen."

"There were no M.P.'s then who made short cuts this way?" suggested Pamela, "nor fishermen? which would be more natural seeing that there *is* a river here."

For the life of her Eveline could not prevent a blush rising, and as Pamela had a way of sitting exactly in front of her when she began her cross-examinations, it was useless to try and hide it, so she looked up, laughing, and said,

"There *was* a fisherman once, but I never even learnt his name."

"And yet you remember him?"

"Yes, for he was the first gentleman, except Colonel Greville, I ever saw, and your remark about fishermen brought the circumstance to my mind."

"Oh!" said Lady Pamela, dryly, "and I suppose he was young and good-looking, or you would not remember him so well after all these years, for I have remarked you appreciate good looks."

"*You* should not quarrel with that," said Eveline, smiling.

"H'm. How comes it that you have seen so little of the world?" asked Pamela, returning to the old subject. "Rich, married, and wandering half over Europe, I should have thought you better informed."

"True, after my marriage we did travel a great deal, but our

> 'Wandering steps
> Obedient to high thoughts, visited
> The awful ruins of the days of old,
> Where dead men
> Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around.'

Our study was not man, but things; we

entered very little into society, and as for a season in London, I never was there till my dear husband's illness brought us home."

"No wonder you are so fresh and unsophisticated. There is nothing like London seasons for robbing the heart of its bloom. I dare say that the show is very charming to outsiders, and to those who are permitted a casual glance; but when one sees the machinery that makes the puppets dance—when one is, in fact, one who helps to pull the strings—ah! bah! it does not raise one's idea of human nature. Envy, ill-nature, and perpetual struggle; that's the machinery. It goes tearing round like a great wheel, crushing every one not strong enough to hold their own."

"Pamela, why are you so bitter?" said Eveline, gently.

"Bitter!" she repeated, "if you knew how —but—" she stopped abruptly, and changing from the momentary scorn to her usual half flippant style, added, "I believe that I was about to be romantic! *Vogue la galère*, when I am married you must come and stay with me, Eve; your pure nature does one good."

"I hope you will be very happy, Pamela."

"Oh, yes, my dear. I like Gaveston; we get on capitally; then the abbey is a dear old place, and Pierrepoint is an old title, so you need not show so much commiseration on that pretty, transparent face of yours. Ah! here comes the wolf in sheep's clothing. I am glad you are coming to us next week. Quiet as this place is, people will talk if he comes here so often."

"I have persuaded Mrs. Greville at last to pay us a visit. It is quite time she came out of her shell," Pamela was speaking to Challenor, as, dressed for her journey, she was waiting while the servants were packing the carriage. "Not but what it is a charming shell," glancing round, "but it is not well to live in this small circumference with only *one*" (she could not resist throwing this Parthian dart) "or two people to come and see her."

Challenor stood his ground well and quoted,

"'Man in society is like a flower,
Blown in its native bed, 'tis there alone
His faculties expanded, in full bloom shine forth.'

I am sure it will a good thing for Mrs. Gre-

ville, and I am very certain it will be a great pleasure to all her friends."

"He did that well," said Pamela to herself, "but he can't deceive me." Then aloud, "And the little hypocrite likes society, only she is too idle to go out for it. She likes to be the lily in her own garden and have her butterflies come to her."

> "'Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
> Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
> More free from peril than the envious court?'"

quoted Mrs. Greville, laughing.

"I am not so sure," replied Lady Pamela, pointedly, with an almost imperceptible glance at Challenor—marked by him, but unseen by Mrs. Greville—"my memory is hardly as good as yours; but I think Shakespeare says somewhere,—

> 'If we shall stand still
> In fear our motion will be mock'd or carp'd at,
> We should take root here where we sit, or sit
> State statues only.'

Therefore I do lay my commands on you to appear at Beaumanoir next week; and," she added in a lower tone, "leave off this heavy black."

Eveline gently shook her head.

"Well, think about it. What an awful time one's maid takes to put one's traps in the carriage. I wonder if all those parcels are hers or mine?"

The last good-bye had been said, and Pamela drove away, leaning back in the carriage, looking very thoughtful.

"A child of ten would be less likely to come to harm. She wants looking after, or, without one thought of wrong doing, she will get compromised. If she *will* keep that cottage she must have a sheep-dog. She can't live there alone. Men *are* so selfish. I dare say that man is at her feet at this moment," so ran her mental soliloquy.

Pamela was right in what she said. Eveline was just the woman on whom the breath of scandal would alight. Her extreme beauty and her absence of all evil-thinking—to the pure all things are pure—were the very things that, living alone as she was, would lay her open to censure.

CHAPTER XII.

"Have I, oh ! say, not found, beloved,
In thy tender eyes a light more sweet
Than morning's."

OWEN MEREDITH.

"For what's more monstrous, more a prodigy,
Than to hear you protest truth of affection
Unto a person you would dishonour ?
And what's greater dishonour, than defacing
Another's good with forfeiting your own ?"

BEN JONSON.

CHALLENOR had responded lightly enough to Lady Pamela's thrust, but now that he was left alone with Eveline his courage failed him. He stood apart, near a window, turning over a portfolio of drawings, but not heeding what he looked at. His thoughts were wandering back to the many quiet, happy hours that he had spent in this very room alone with her, with none others to share her conversation,

none others on whom her sweet smile could fall, and now she was about to re-enter the world, and all those "slow sweet hours" were at an end for him!

Thus ran the burden of his thoughts, while Eveline, accustomed to see him "moody," as she called it, took no notice of a silence that was of common occurrence with him.

"So you are really going to Beaumanoir," said he, at last, holding a drawing in various angles, so as to throw a better light on it.

"Not without a struggle, I confess," she replied, taking up her work. "My life has passed so peacefully here, that I have small wish to leave it, and the thought of entering the world alone, appals me, though I could not be under kinder auspices than the Okehamptons."

"Yet you will be welcomed, admired, loved, wherever you go, and in that universal homage, who can say how soon old scenes, old friends, will be forgotten?"

"Forgotten!" she exclaimed, surprised at the bitterness in his tone. "Old friends forgotten! Why should you think that?"

"New scenes, new interests, new faces, are very apt to efface old ones."

"Surely not," said Mrs. Greville, warmly, "Is the human heart so small that it cannot add to its store of remembrances, without displacing old ones? Because life leads us onwards, must we discard old memories? I am afraid that you get that notion from your progressive policy, which looks upon all past things as worse than useless, because they are the past. I am a conservative, you know," she continued, playfully, "and love old times."

"I am conservative enough in some things, God knows," he said, not moving his position, but speaking with a sudden fervour that startled her. "There are times that I would never have changed could I prevent it."

"That is the best sentiment you have uttered for a long time," said Eveline, lightly. "Has something gone wrong with the educational plan, some pet scholar turned renegade, or—not your constituents proving too troublesome?"

"I was not thinking of constituents nor schools," said he, drearily, "I was thinking rather of the evanescence of human pleasure:

> 'Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow,
> Nought may endure but mutability.'"

"An unkindly and not a true sentiment," rejoined Eveline, "taken in your mood."

'The clouds that veil the midnight moon,'"

continuing his quotation, "may pass away, but the moon remains; so will our affections. Outer things may change—they are the clouds that break and speed away—but the affections, the friendships remain to light the days as each successive morrow brings fresh clouds with it. You are in a gloomy frame of mind to-day."

"I was thinking that very probably, once you leave this place, you will never return to it, and that all the happy hours I have spent here have, with this visit, come to an end."

"I hope not," returned Eveline; "I sincerely hope not. I have not the smallest idea of ever giving up this dear old place, dearer than I can say—the home of my happy childhood—endeared to me by the holiest and most sacred of ties. Oh, no," she continued, dropping her hands in her lap, and gazing towards the sunlit landscape with fond remembrance, "I shall never give this up, and

I hope," she added, cheerfully, "that you and Mrs. Challenor will still take compassion on me sometimes as heretofore."

Why did he not go then, whilst yet he held the mastery over himself?

How often do we mar the good for which we have toiled for years, by yielding to the fascination of a last look, a last word? How often do we allow the resolutions obtained by a life's struggle, to be swept away like cobwebs by one touch of that fatal last time?

Something in her voice as she uttered the last words warned him, with the subtle instinct of love, that she mistrusted his friendship, warned him that no farther might he go; but like one who, looking from a great height, is drawn by some horrible fascination to cast himself down, well knowing that destruction lurks beneath, so was he impelled by her very caution to cast himself over the precipice. He knew that if he spoke the burning words that scorched his brain, he would be lost—he knew that the pure being, whom he worshipped, would spurn and scorn him, and yet they trembled on his lips.

He gazed on her one earnest moment as

though to impress her image even more vividly on his memory—she was bending over her work-basket, the winter's sunlight falling on her head, bringing out all the rich tints of her rippling hair, and touching with a golden sheen the curls that caressed her soft, white throat.

How lovely, how womanly she looked! but not for him. He knew that they must part, and he buried his face in his hands, and a deep, smothered groan escaped his lips.

She thought that he was ill—in pain—and rising hurriedly, she laid her hand on his shoulder, and asked what ailed him.

Her slight touch sent a shiver through him. He raised a haggard face that terrified her, and the long pent-up passion broke forth in a torrent of words which she had no power to stop. Indeed, amazement held her speechless. *This*, the cold, hard, iron-hearted man, whose intellect gave no place for affection, for tenderness? *This* the stern, calculating politician? But when he fell at her feet, and buried his face in her gown, her presence of mind returned.

She ought no doubt to have been angry,

indignant, and scornfully ordered him from her presence; but hers was one of those tender, affectionate natures that "feels for others' woes," that remembers past kindness, that shrinks from inflicting pain. His long friendship for her husband, his constant forethought for him when he was struck down by illness, his unvarying kindness towards herself rose before her; and pitying the man's agony, she spoke gently, but bid him rise from where it was no place for him to kneel.

He obeyed her like one in a dream, and, with haggard eyes fixed on her kind, but untroubled ones, waited to hear the doom he already felt. Calm and gentle as was her voice, her words cut him like a two-edged sword.

"I cannot say how distressed I am. I am sure you will believe me when I tell you that I never had the faintest suspicion of this, or we should both have been spared this sorrow. No; I am not angry," she said in answer to his deprecating look, "for the sake of *him* whose friend you were, and to whom you were so kind in his hour of sorrow; but what would *he* say to this — of the friend he honoured above all?"

"Oh, have pity! have mercy!" groaned Challenor; "you know not how I love you—how I worship you! I have struggled for years against this madness, and in vain."

"For years?" echoed Eveline, astounded.

"Ay; ever since I have known you, and I can no longer hide it from you."

"Mr. Challenor, these are not words for *you* to utter to any woman. If I have given you cause to think that you might thus speak to me, heaven knows it has been unintentional, and I ask your forgiveness. Now we must part."

"Ah, do not say so," he cried—her gentle manner made him catch at a straw—"do not send me from you! Do not cast me into hopeless misery! Eveline, my devotion for you is a love that will increase day by day; nothing can change it. I will give up everything—go where you will—do anything—everything—only do not bid me leave you! Eveline, have pity!—say one kind word."

"I fear that I have said too many, or you would not speak thus to me," said Eveline, coldly. "Forgive my saying so, but such love from *you* is dishonour to *me*. They are hard

words for you to hear," she added, seeing a shudder pass over him, "but they are true. I cannot tell you how this has pained me, for it has cost me my best friend, and the one in whom I placed most faith."

He gave her one look—one piteous look—such as one might see in the pleading eyes of a dumb animal that has had its death wound—but there was no relenting in the cold, grave expression of that lovely face.

He knew his fate—he had known it all along—yet had rushed on it with the blind madness of passion. There was unutterable anguish in the deep humility with which he knelt down, kissed the hem of her dress, and went without another word.

Eveline sat stupefied, like one waking from a horrible dream, and endeavoured to collect her stunned senses. It had come so suddenly—passed so quickly—that she could scarcely realise it. The friendship of years destroyed in a moment! It was like the hewing down of a tree in all its beauty; and she sat mentally gazing on the wreck with unfeigned sorrow—sorrow for both herself and him; but chiefly for him, for she guessed how much he

must have suffered ere he allowed passion to prevail over honour—ere he could have allowed himself to insult her. At that last thought, less gentle feelings took possession of her, and she started to her feet, and addressing the empty air, asked, "How he dared?"

Crushed to the earth, Challenor had left her, scorning, hating himself for having betrayed his feelings to the pure-hearted woman for whom he would have laid down his life, and for having shut out from himself, by his own act, his one happiness—those sweet—alas! too sweet!—hours with her. Fool! dolt that he had been! Could he not have kept his lips sealed? What could he have expected but her scorn?

He hastily packed his portmanteau, for he never brought his servant to Llanfenydd, and went back to London.

Anything for movement—quiet would drive him mad. As it was, those long hours ere he reached town seemed interminable, and jumping into a cab, drove home; but he had not been expected; Mrs. Challenor was away, and he left the cold, dreary house, and walked down to his club.

Meeting one or two men whom he knew, they stopped him to speak of some ministerial matters, but he answered so strangely that they spoke of it later in the evening in the smoking-room, saying, "Challenor was over-working himself, by Jove! They never saw a man so altered: if he did not take care, he would have a brain fever, or something of that sort."

"What a bore at this time of year!" observed Mr. Bob Markham; "and open weather, too. It is deuced hard that a fellow should be worked all the year round to be made ill in the hunting season. I always pitied those poor devils in office—one might as well be a brute in a mill."

"Some people would not be out of place there, Bob," remarked a cynical-looking man, speaking with the cigar between his teeth, a cloud of smoke obscuring his face.

"Don't forget we go by the 10.40 train, Bob," said Lord Gaveston, coming to the rescue. "They expect us to luncheon at Beaumanoir."

"All right, old fellow," was the answer, and the talk merged into other topics.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Oh! that for me some home like this would smile!"

"The light coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,
And sport and flutter in the fields of air."
POPE.

BEHOLD Beaumanoir, Lady Pamela's home! A palace almost in size, and situated in a park of many miles in circumference, with such timber as can only be seen in England. The groves of trees now stretched forth their giant arms in all the bareness of winter, leaving the imagination to pause in wonderment at what their glory must be in summer. Red deer clustered on some of the farther heights, while their tamer fallow brethren crouched in ferny retreats nearer home; and the small, graceful red cattle from Devon held undisputed sway still nearer the abode of man, none

other being ever allowed to graze in that picturesque, undulating park.

The house was an immense pile of stone building, two wings and a centre, with a flight of steps under a portico, which projected sufficiently to allow a carriage to stand beneath. This said portico had been a source of much discussion, much disapprobation, but every one allowed its comfort, especially when rain came down in torrents, and people had to come in or go out. So the portico remained.

In the front, which looked south, were broad gravelled terraces, with stone balustrades, statues, and fountains. Evergreen shrubberies were artistically arranged so as to take away the stiff, formal look of such gardens in the winter, when flowers will not grow; the lawns were of unspotted velvet; not a daisy reared its white head, or if it did, it lost it at dawn, a victim to its temerity; for the order everywhere was perfect—speaking well for the supervision exercised on all around.

The library—a long, lofty room with several recessed windows, and a large square-bayed one at the end, looking on to the carriage

sweep, allowing those who felt so inclined to watch all arrivals—was the usual morning lounge.

It was shortly after her visit to Eveline that Pamela was presiding one day over a tea-table in the large bay-window. She was surrounded by a group of young people, some of whom were half lying on sofas, or curled up in arm-chairs; some standing about; others —men—were sitting after the manner of their kind, astride on their chairs, their arms folded on the backs, making resting-places for their chins, from which vantage-point they lazily admired the popular Lady Pamela.

Near a fire piled up with pine-logs and roots, sat Lady Okehampton, with a few people of maturer age than those gathered in the window.

Lady Okehampton, as kind and gentle a lady as ever was given to worsted work—which at this present moment was lying idly in her lap, it being too dark for the intricacies of cross-stitch—was very fond and proud of her children, who did exactly as they liked with her—an arrangement which suited all parties perfectly well.

Her husband, the Earl of Okehampton, was as handsome a specimen of a fine English country gentleman as one might wish to see, about fifty-five years of age, but hale and strong as he had been twenty years ago; tall, high-bred, kindly, courteous, devoted to field-sports, and the most popular M.F.H. the county had ever had.

Their family, besides Pamela, consisted of the next daughter Gwendoline, Lord Lorton the eldest son, and some younger children.

A gentle hum of conversation was going on by the fireside, and a far more noisy one at the other end of the room in the bay-window.

"How awfully dull the country is getting," exclaimed a young lady, attired in a fanciful but very becoming walking-costume. "I am dying to get to town, ain't you, Pam?"

"No, I can't say that I am. I feel very far from being moribund—duchess, will you have some tea? I am not mad about London as you are. I prefer the country at all seasons."

"I like London; but we have had up to now a delicious winter—plenty of skating, for the lake froze better this year than I ever

remember it," quoth Lady Gwendoline, a fair-haired beauty in a riding-habit.

"That must have been no end nice," languidly observed Humphrey Devereux, a young Guardsman, of stalwart frame, some six foot high, who was lying in much exhaustion in a corner of a sofa.

"Too fatiguing for you. You would not have stood it," retorted Lady Gwendoline, satirically; "even I was tired one day."

"Were you, really? I dare say it would have been very fatiguing," said the other, unabashed, "still it would have been better than the Tower. It is an awful place that Tower."

"Do you mean the Tower of London?" asked a shy, young girl, evidently not one of the initiated, and speaking in a tone of much interest.

"They *say* it is somewhere in London, but *I* should call it decidedly out of town," said the soldier.

"But I mean *the* Tower," insisted the young lady, better read in her English history than in the annals of Mayfair, "where traitors

were imprisoned and beheaded—were you there? how horrible!"

"Yes, was it not?" replied Mr. Devereux, with the utmost gravity. "They only didn't behead us—at least I don't think they did," and he felt his neck as though to make sure it was safe.

"The fact is, Miss Darrell," said Lord Gaveston, sitting forward, and speaking confidentially, "the fact is, we are the body-guard of her august Majesty, and as we number pretty strong, the Horse Guards are a little afraid of us (only don't repeat this, it might do harm), so they shut us up in the Tower for a few months, sometimes, to quell our spirits a little. You see how it has affected Devereux, poor fellow."

"Don't be a fool, Gaveston," said Lady Pamela, too well-bred to allow a guest who could not hold her own to be chaffed under her father's roof, "and you, Lucy, don't believe a word he says. They are as jolly as possible at the Tower, and have no end of fun; though they do get locked out sometimes, like schoolboys, and I *have* heard of their playing cards on fish stalls all night."

"I don't think that sounds very nice," ventured Lucy, shyly.

"No indeed, Miss Darrell," said Devereux, from the sofa, in the most injured voice, "you little know what an ill-used, hard-worked set of mortals we are."

"Far and away the idlest I ever knew," said Lady Gwen, helping herself to a slice of cake.

"Idle?" exclaimed one of the young gentlemen, lifting his chin from his arms, "idle? why Bob Markham, there, has been reading and studying all day long."

"Why, Bob," exclaimed Lord Gaveston, pirouetting his chair round, "when did you ever read anything beyond your betting-book?"

"He reads shocking bad books then," said another, at which there was a laugh.

"By Jove! there's a carriage!" cried Bob, with sudden energy; "who is it? a little widow!"

"By all that's lovely! what a foot and ankle!" exclaimed another, watching Eveline get out of the carriage.

"I say, you fellows," cried Gaveston, "this is not the club window.

"Who's the divinity?" asked Bob, returning to the table.

"A great chum of Pam's," said Lady Gwen, "she is a sort of a cousin of ours. Her grandfather was our great aunt's only something—I forget what."

"Father," suggested the Honourable Devereux.

"*Only father*," said Lord Symperwell. "Now, that's curious, I thought a fellow only *could* have one father."

"Why, Symper, what a fellow you are," ejaculated Bob; "can't a fellow have a father, and a father-in-law, and a step-father, all at once?"

Mrs. Greville was here announced, and Pamela had gone forward to greet her. Lady Okehampton began to gather her worsteds together to rise to meet her guest, but long before she had done so, Eveline was at her side picking up the balls that always rolled away when her ladyship moved, and restored them to their owner.

"So glad to see you, my dear," said she,

"I am very glad you have come to us. I suppose you are quite frozen and tired. Did you leave Lan—Lan?"

"Llanfenydd," said Eveline, in her musical voice, pronouncing the word with its soft Gaelic accent.

"Yes, my dear, it is a dreadful word, but it sounds very pretty when you say it. I am sure you are very cold."

Eveline assured her she was neither cold nor tired.

Pamela wanted to take her to the tea-table, but Eveline glancing towards it, felt shy of so many strangers, and preferred staying where she was.

"Duchess, let me introduce my cousin, Mrs. Greville," said Lady Okehampton, turning to a stout, handsome woman near her.

The duchess had heard a good deal of Mrs. Greville, and had formed some plans of her own respecting her and her son, Lord Plantagenet Fitz-Henry—of small patrimony and large expences—always providing Mrs. Greville were perfectly *comme il faut*. She was favourably impressed, although the twilight did not allow of any great inspection, and

Eveline had withdrawn from the heat and glare of the fire; but what she saw pleased her, so she was cautiously civil, just so much so that the scales could be turned either way on further acquaintance, if necessary.

Fortunately, Eveline was unconscious of the extreme condescension vouchsafed her, or she would hardly have answered her grace with the good humour she did.

"You will be glad to come to your room, Eveline, I am sure," said Pamela, carrying her off.

No sooner had they gone than the voices at the end of the room broke forth.

"Now, Gwen, tell us who this lady in black is," said Florence Kinnaird, the young lady who voted the country dull.

"She is a chum of Pam's, and a kind of relation of mamma's," replied her ladyship. "She is not *my* friend, you know, and for all her quiet manner, I believe she is a desperate flirt."

"A flirt in weeds! oh! for shame," said Jack Darrell, a devoted admirer of Lady Gwendoline's.

"I think a widow's cap *so* becoming," quoth Lucy.

"I'll tell the curate you say so," retorted her brother.

"We have not even heard the name of the divinity in the widow's cap, and I quite agree with you, Miss Darrell, I have seen women look very pretty in one," said Lord Gaveston.

"*You* ought to know all about her, Gaveston," said Everard Digby, a barrister, coming forward, "had it not been for your father she would have inherited the Pierrepoint estates."

"By Jove! I did not know I'd had such a narrow escape," quoth his lordship. A laugh followed this sally.

"Well, *she* had, anyhow," returned Digby, "she was grand-daughter of the late Lord Pierrepoint, and as the estates are entailed on the females, failing male heirs, she would have succeeded; so had it not been for your father, Gaveston, she would have been in his shoes."

"Rather large ones," remarked Bob Markham, with a vision of the foot and ankle he had seen, "for I think Lord Pierrepoint's gouty."

"And is she really so well off as is said?" asked the duchess, who had come up during

the conversation. "You seem to know all about her, Mr. Digby."

"Greville left her everything, duchess; she can't have less than eight thousand a year at least, all in the funds, too."

"Really," replied her grace, suavely, "that is a very nice fortune for a woman. Young, and rather pretty, too, I should say. I think it is almost time to dress for dinner," and her grace glided away.

"It must be awfully jolly to be a widow, and have such lots of money," said Florence Kinnaird.

"I think Mrs. Greville would give up all her money to have her husband alive," said Digby, rather gravely; "I never witnessed such devotion in my life as hers to him."

"And a—a—a what sort of fellow was this Greville?" asked Devereux, still reposing his weary limbs.

"As good a fellow as ever lived," said Digby, warmly.

"But he must have been thirty years older than his wife, and was paralysed for a long time before he died," said Lady Gwen.

"Thirty years older than his wife!" said

Miss Kinnaird, "and she was devoted to him?" she made up a face as though she were going to whistle, but she didn't. "That bird won't fly, Mr. Digby. Come, Gwen, it's time to dress," and the ladies walked off.

"That's a rum story of yours, Digby, I don't quite believe in a woman loving a man thirty years older than herself; but I suppose she is one of your model women, eh?"

"I shall say nothing about her, you'll judge for yourself."

This was said as the men strolled across the hall, to have a smoke before dinner.

CHAPTER XIV.

"*Rom.* Oh she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,
As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.
* * * *
I ne'er saw true beauty till this night."
ROMEO AND JULIET.

"*Lor.* Here will we sit and let the sounds of music creep in our ears."—MERCHANT OF VENICE.

No little curiosity was displayed by the party assembled in the Beaumanoir drawing-room before dinner, respecting the young, beautiful, wealthy Mrs. Greville, who did not make her appearance till the gong had sounded. Though little dreaming the ordeal that awaited her, she was very shy on entering alone for the first time, a room full of strangers; but the shyness sat on her as gracefully as on a young fawn, and when she came through the folding doors, thrown wide open by the footmen, into

the brilliantly-lighted room, a murmur of admiration arose. For once expectation was surpassed by the reality.

Her fair skin was well contrasted by the black tulle dress; and the black enamel jewelry, sparkling with diamonds, which circled her tapering wrists and slender throat, still further enhanced the purity of their whiteness. Her hair, twisted in two heavy ropes round the back of her head, ended in soft curls that shaded her neck.

"Very lovely, and perfectly well bred," said the duchess to Lord Okehampton, who stood near her.

"She ought to be," he replied, "Gaveston and Colonna."

"'When Gavestons with Colonna wed,
The results are seen to be well-bred,'"

quoth Bob Markham, "that was rather a neat epitaph for an extempore, I flatter myself."

"Epitaph! well done, Markham."

"Well, episode, epithet, epigram, I've got it at last."

Lord Okehampton went forward to give his arm to the beautiful stranger. She had never seen him before for he had not been in Rome

when she had made the acquaintance of Lady Okehampton and her two daughters; she raised her lovely eyes to his face, as she thanked him with a smile that enslaved him then and there.

"I suppose my lady ought to introduce us in proper form," said he, "but I claim a sort of property in you, so we may dispense with the ceremony."

"It is very pleasant to find relations in those who are so kind," she answered, with a smile.

Lady Okehampton made room for her on the sofa.

Some of the men declared, "By Jove, she was a stunner."

Lord Gaveston went up to Lady Okehampton, bending down to Miss Darrell as he passed her, saying—

"Where is the widow's cap? It would be a sin to cover up that hair."

"She had one in her bonnet," replied matter-of-fact Lucy.

"Aunt Mildred," he said, as he reached Lady Okehampton, "will you present me? I find I am a cousin, and a nearer one than any

here. In fact, Mrs. Greville," he continued, addressing Eveline, "I may say I am your nearest relative in England. You have behaved in the most uncousinly manner, keeping out of our way all this time."

Eveline laughed, as she said—

"Well, at all events, I will confess to having been very anxious to make your acquaintance. You know that Pamela and I are great friends."

"Ah, that last sentence has destroyed the delightful illusion of the first one. I was just thinking you had been entertaining a proper feeling for a kinsman. Let me take you into dinner. It is quite romantic, finding an unknown cousin."

"Bring Mrs. Greville next me," said Lord Okehampton, who had the Duchess of Montserrat on his arm.

"We are all fighting for you already, you see," said Gaveston, as he led her in to dinner.

Eveline laughed, that merry, silvery laugh, that is so pleasant to hear, as she replied to his badinage.

"Well, and how do you like us *en famille?*" asked Pamela, after dinner.

"Very much, and I think Lord Gaveston delightful," replied Eveline.

"I saw that you kept up a brisk flirtation during dinner."

"With you opposite," laughed Mrs. Greville. "As our conversation was chiefly of you, I think we may both be absolved. But, honestly, I do like him very much, and unless he belies his face, I think he is worthy even of you. You were not half eloquent enough about him."

"I am not romantic, you know," rejoined Pamela, but pleased at her friend's warm encomium, "and if I had depicted him all my fancy paints him," and Lady Pamela spoke in the half-mocking tone under cover of which she was apt to hide anything that savoured of feeling, "you might have been disappointed, and said, 'Is *that* your hero?' How do you like my father?"

"My *beau idéal* of an English gentleman. How cheery it is to belong to a large family!"

"I don't know," returned Pamela; "at least the delight don't consist so much in the quantity as the quality. *We* pull together, but I

don't know that all large families do so simply because they *are* large families."

"Well, I am quite prepared to claim cousinship with any one who will own me," said Eveline, gaily.

"I am afraid you won't have many opportunities," said Pamela, "there are few Gavestons left; Lord Pierrepoint has only two sons, Charles—the other one—is in the Church, a muscular, a very muscular Christian, six foot four. His curacy is a sinecure, and when he has the rectory it will be a greater one; but I like Charles, though, like Gaveston, he is very lazy. It is in the blood."

"Pamela is always pitching into me for laziness," said Lord Gaveston, who joined them as his *fiancée* was speaking, and drew a chair near them. "I always tell her there's no use in needless expenditure of strength. When all's done who's the better for it? *You* ought to stick up for a fellow, Mrs. Greville, for you *can* have nothing to do down in your place. Where is it?"

"In what you would call banishment," she replied, laughing, "but in a very beautiful spot in Wales."

"Isn't it awfully dull?"

"Not in the least, and I hope that before long you and Pamela will come and see my little den. I can offer you fishing in the way of sport."

"Do you think we cannot get on without that help? Well, perhaps you are right. Vandeleur is one of the few men I know who don't seem to care about it."

"When he has a flirtation on hand," observed Pamela.

"I *really* don't think that Van's a flirt," said Lord Gaveston, with that inflection on the word 'really' which always betokens doubt. "I am sure he is very attentive to that awful wife of his, and he is a good deal at home."

"When he *is* at home," said Pamela, epigrammatically.

"You are always hard on Vandeleur."

"I think not. I think him very pleasant, —he has a charming manner, but I believe him to be a very selfish and superficial man, and he lives too much—" here she hesitated, and Gaveston finished the sentence with a laugh.

"*En garçon?* Do you know Henry Van-

deleur ?" he asked, addressing Mrs. Greville. "No? Well I think him one of the nicest fellows going, and if he does like talking to a pretty woman, most of us pull an oar in that boat ; and he is a capital shot, first-rate across country, and reads, and that sort of thing ; but it don't spoil him."

"Quite an admirable Crichton," laughed Eveline.

"I should hardly have accused Mr. Vandeleur of reading too much ; however, you will judge for yourself, for he is coming to-morrow," said Pamela.

"Mamma says there should be some music," said a younger sister, a child of twelve, coming up shyly.

"I think it is time for you to be in bed, little one," said Pamela, "go and tell Gwen to sing."

Lady Gwendoline was the centre of a group at the other end of the room. She was on a low prie-dieu chair, a solitaire board on her lap —a game she affected, for not only did it show off her perfect hands to great advantage, but she knew that it invariably drew men round to watch and tender advice, and Lady Gwen

loved admiration as the air she breathed. She liked to keep a little court about her. Her two female satellites were Miss Kinnaird, a fast, fashionable young lady, and Lucy Darrell, the rector's daughter, who worshipped with a deep and humble worship, not entirely free from awe.

"I say, Gwen, when is Pamela's marriage coming off, and where?" asked Florence.

"After Easter—here," was the laconic answer, as her ladyship, uncertain of the move, poised a glass ball in her fairy fingers over the board.

"Brevity is the soul of wit," said Jack Darrell.

"Shan't you go up before Easter, then?" returned Florence.

"Certainly not. We never do."

"What a bore!" said Florence.

"Oh, Miss Kinnaird," said Lucy, "don't you like the country?"

Miss Kinnaird gave her a supercilious look, but did not deem it necessary to answer.

"That move will ruin you," and a shapely brown hand interposed between the solitaire board and Lady Gwen's white fingers.

The speaker was a tall, dark man, in the prime of life ; a heavy, black moustache was the only hirsute appendage on a colourless, sunburnt face, which was certainly handsome, but hardly pleasant, so merciless, indomitable was its expression. He was not popular with men, who wondered what women saw in that "black fellow," to like. That they *did* like him, and that he had been passionately loved, more than one ugly story could tell. There was a bold, highly rouged woman, more often seen at the German gaming tables than anywhere else, who had been in good society in England. "Such an awful woman, my dear," said her countrywomen, when they spoke of her—with a pious shudder.

Yet she had once been an honoured wife and a happy mother.

None knew, though a few guessed that she owed her fall to Humphrey Pierce. He spoiled the bloom, then left the flower to wither or live as chance might be. He soon tired of her, but she never betrayed him, and after he had left her, unable to bear her remorse and her husband's trustful eyes, she one day left her home, and was not heard of for many months;

then some one saw her, reckless and flushed, at Homburg, gambling with fierce excitement. Anything to drown memory—the thought of her young children—the kind husband—ay! and the recollection of one she still loved, and whose face still haunted her dreams.

Years had passed since then, and she had sunk lower and lower, and if he, the cause of this ruin, ever thought of her, it was with a shrug of disgust.

There had been a young loving girl whose faith he had betrayed; but she was the only child of a widowed mother, and how could she seek redress when he turned with a laugh from her tear-stained face, as on her knees she besought the only reparation that he could make. The poor mother was fain to hush up the disgrace in silence; and the deep, bitter, but unavailing curse which she invoked on the despoiler of her child was all the retribution which *he* got, while his victim soon after died, broken-hearted, and the mother was taken, a harmless lunatic, to an asylum.

However much such things may be hushed up, they do get abroad, and though they had never been brought home to Pierce, he was

more than suspected by many men who knew him, and with whom he was no favourite; but women thought differently.

Had he not brought back from India a reputation that was sure to raise him in their estimation? Had he not borne himself in the thickest troop

> "As doth a lion in a herd of neat?
> Or as a bear, encompass'd round with dogs,
> Who, having pinch'd a few, and made them cry,
> The rest stand all aloof, and bark at him?"

The deep scar across his forehead was no dissight in their eyes.

His immense physical strength and courage had a strange fascination for them, as it ever has with us women. He would back the most vicious "Cruizer" with as much *sang froid* as a lady mounts her hack, and long before he was tired, the horse would give in from sheer exhaustion. What could fatigue those iron muscles that could bend a poker like a piece of lead?

Women ever give a higher meed of praise to these physical feats, to mere animal courage, than to the stern, quiet fortitude of the man who, with a weak sickly *physique*, has courage

to plunge the knife into the cancer of his heart, and cut it out without a murmur.

It is our nature. Because we can and often do endure great mental suffering—because we *must* endure without a murmur—we think but lightly of the same effort in the other sex. It is the strong, physical courage, of which our weaker frames are incapable, that so excites our admiration. I fancy that it is only one of his own sex who can enter into the poet's enthusiasm, about the man

> "Who knew the right
> And did it."

We do it—why not they?

I have known timid, nervous women, who would fear to cross a field with half-a-dozen milch cows in it, yet with calm, silent courage pluck as it were their very hearts out, trample them under foot, and die from the cruel wound without uttering one audible word of complaint, nor think they had done aught so great after all. "Was it not right?" would they say. Surely such courage will be recorded on high, where "man's strength is but as water."

This is a long digression, but old memories and old scenes come before me sometimes, and

an old woman's garrulity gets the better of me.

"That move will ruin your game," had Sir Humphrey Pierce said.

Lady Gwendoline looked up at the speaker. She was a small fair creature, not more than three-and-twenty, and looking years younger, partly owing to the simplicity of her head-dress—a most simple coiffure, apparently, but her maid, who knew the art and care with which each flaxen curl and blue ribbon was placed, could tell a different story.

The cold glitter of her steel blue eyes was a strange contrast to the infantile face, till one marked the resolute, thin lips, and then one saw that eyes and mouth matched.

She had completely fascinated Sir Humphrey Pierce, and she fully intended to marry him—his family was ancient, his income enormous, a most undeniable parti—but for once he had met his match.

No man, no matter what his experience may be, is a match for a woman of the world who does not love him. If she does, *væ victis!* The feeblest willow that bends to the evening zephyr is stronger than she, but

let her have the calm use of her head and she will have the best of it.

Here was this small, fair thing, whom he could crush in his hand like a butterfly, always defying him, fending off his attempts at an offer, flourishing her small, puny strength, so to say, in his face, and never letting him go beyond the tether she allowed him, "thus far and no farther."

She was a riddle to him. The opposition of this fragile creature, undaunted and fearless, was not without its charm to one who had hitherto made a rather personal application of Cæsar's motto. It was a novelty, and he was as resolved to conquer and break her will, as he had been to break that wild chestnut horse of his. When she was out of his sight he would laugh to think of that soft, fair, childlike creature throwing down the gauntlet and standing up to him; but once again within her elfin power, he felt it, and was compelled to acknowledge it.

There was a defiant look in her cold, calm eyes, as she raised them to his, without moving the position of her hand.

"I don't agree with you."

"It would be strange if you did," said he, withdrawing his hand.

The tinge of bitterness in his voice was not lost on the fairy who smiled to herself as she placed the ball in the hollow that she had intended for its receptacle. She won her game and handed the board to Sir Humphrey with a triumphant look, and pouring the balls from her own lap into that of Miss Kinnaird, the Lady Gwendoline rose up.

"Come, Lucy," she said, turning to Miss Darrell, "my lady has asked for music."

While Miss Darrell was sorting some, Lady Gwendoline carelessly swept the strings of her harp, bringing out a succession of plaintive minor chords, in strange variance with the light badinage she was exchanging with several men near her.

Sir Humphrey stood aloof, a dark look lowering on his face. Apparently she did not see him, but not a movement was lost on her. She knew the fascination which music had over him, and used it as one of her strong weapons. Often, when making him smart with a thousand little thorns that she ran into him, she would,

"With ravishing sound of her melodious harp,
Make music with his Mephistopheles,"

and so bring him to her feet again.

She selected a *mélange* of the Irish melodies, and accompanied by the faithful Lucy, she played them with exquisite pathos.

Her back was turned to Pierce, but what is that to a woman? She knew that he was coming towards her as perfectly as though she held in her hands the strings that drew him. She felt every step, and when he was close to her she drew forth such tones from her harp that, bending over her, he whispered,

"Are you an angel or a devil?"

She looked back at him over her shoulder with a mocking smile, and began a little Turkish air which she had heard him whistle.

In another part of the room Mr. Digby and Miss Constance Wilson were talking together.

Miss Wilson was one of those people one occasionally meets in great houses, and of whom one cannot help asking oneself, "How comes she here?"

She was neither young, nor pretty, nor of

any attraction, nor extraction, but was one of those people who do get asked about. She was a wonderfully useful person, and never let a chance slip. If a list had to be made out, her nimble fingers were always ready ; if any tiresome old lady had to be amused, nothing delighted Miss Wilson so much as playing cribbage, backgammon—anything—always, be it understood, if any one were near to admire such unselfishness. But with all this amiability few people liked Miss Wilson. Men especially distrusted her, so that at five and thirty she was, much to her chagrin, Miss Wilson still, for marriage was to her the only escape from grinding poverty at home.

Lord Okehampton had fairly said "he could not bear the woman, whose cunning eyes and thin lips gave the lie to all her d—d good nature," but his wife, if she did not like her, found her useful ; she sorted her wools so well, and always put her work right; "and besides," she said, "I hear there is something between her and Mr. Digby, and it is a pity not to let them meet."

"Digby is a greater fool than I take him

for," said my lord, "if he has any idea of marrying Miss Wilson; however, do as you like, my dear."

So Miss Wilson was invited, and had been some days at Beaumanoir when Eveline arrived, during which time she had been doing her best to captivate Mr. Digby, but he, seeing through her, was rather amused in watching her little game.

Heavens! how furious she would have been could she have known his thoughts! The moment that she saw him and Eveline together she scented a rival, and forthwith hated her; and her hatred was not a thing to laugh at. It was quiet, and sure as slow poison. She could always bide her time, and when it arrived it would find her cruel and relentless as on the day when she was stung, and if

> "The venom clamours of a jealous woman
> Poison more deadly than a mad dog's tooth,"

and the "whitest virtue be not proof against back wounding calumny," woe betide those on whom the slightest shadow has fallen if they come across Miss Wilson's path!

"You seem old friends with that—person," said Miss Wilson presently, to Digby.

"That—'person'—is Mrs. Greville, whom I have had the honour of knowing some years," said Digby, rather stiffly.

"Rather pretty, isn't she?" continued Constance.

"I think she is the most lovely woman I ever saw," returned he, more warmly perhaps than was quite courteous to another woman.

"Wonderfully well dressed, certainly, but surely those diamonds are a little—just a little—over-much for a newly-made widow. I cannot imagine a woman in her position being able to think of ornaments, and choosing mourning jewelry, can you?"

"Colonel Greville has been dead these two years, and I happen to know that those very ornaments were a present from himself years ago;" Digby was rather irate at the disparaging tone that the other adopted.

"She is very young, evidently; but really, even her youth can hardly excuse her flirting as she does; and don't you think her rather affected?"

"A beautiful, graceful, and agreeable

woman is apt to be called a flirt and affected by those less gifted than herself, but my cousin is neither the one nor the other," said a haughty voice near her.

Miss Wilson looked round in dismay. She was afraid of out-spoken Lady Pamela; and that she, of all people, should have overheard her remarks on Mrs. Greville—a cousin, too!

Digby laughed, and Lady Pamela sailed away.

"There's a woman here I hate," said she, going over to her *fiancé*, "and she must be put down."

"I shouldn't have thought you'd want any help in that line, *ma belle*," returned Lord Gaveston, lazily pulling his long whiskers and regarding her with languid admiration.

"Not often," laughed Pamela, "but I do now. You must ask her to sing: nothing very terrible, you see."

"Will she come to grief?"

"Not at all; she don't sing worse than other people, only *I* don't choose to ask her."

"Is that all? Who's the lady?" inquired Gaveston.

"Miss Wilson."

Lord Gaveston turned round and saw her talking with Digby.

"Now, I call that downright cruelty. I'll be hanged if I spoil sport; I haven't the heart, really."

"Very well, as you please," said Pamela, and she went over to her mother.

"I think Miss Wilson ought to be asked to sing, mamma; she likes it, and people are getting stupid."

"By all means, my dear; pray ask her. I am sure she will, she is so obliging."

"Tell Mr. Digby to ask her, mamma," said Pamela, with a malicious look.

Lady Okehampton did as she was bid; and while Miss Wilson was being led to the piano, Pamela, laying her hand lightly on Eveline's shoulder, said—

"You must sing 'Roberto,' presently—just when I tell you."

As her ladyship had sarcastically said, Miss Wilson did not sing worse than other people. It was a very mediocre performance. It was not noticed, and it covered much talking; but this was not the punishment that her ladyship had in reserve for her.

"Mr. Markham," said wicked Lady Pamela, demurely, "do you know that Miss Wilson sings 'Son virgine vezzoza,' divinely? Do ask her for it."

Bob Markham did as he was bid, and did it so well that Miss Wilson, charmed, dashed off in style.

"That's rum singing, Lady Pamela," said Bob, with uplifted eyebrows.

Bob had a good ear for music.

"Don't you like it?" quoth she, so gravely, that Eveline laughed.

"I say, Pam, I call that a shame," said Gaveston.

"She likes doing it. Don't distress yourself," said Pamela, unconcernedly.

As soon as Miss Wilson finished, Lady Pamela took Eveline to the piano.

"Lucy shall accompany you; she accompanies very well."

"So I remarked," said Eveline, turning to Miss Darrell with a smile.

Eveline had a glorious voice, and all that the best masters could do for it had been done, which, with steady practice, had made

her a vocalist rarely heard off the stage and not often on it.

As soon as the first notes of Meyerbeer's thrilling song swelled through the room, the loud hum of talking ceased suddenly, as though at the command of an enchantress—every one hung entranced on the delicious voice, which took them all by surprise and held them spell-bound. Did not Orpheus draw stones and trees by his music? And is there not a power in a very beautiful voice to which no one is insensible? and when to that is added the most perfect tuition and skill, the effect is magical.

Devoted to music as she was, she breathed forth her very soul in those exquisite strains; for though as yet no love had ever been awakened in her, it was there latent—wanting but the Promethean spark to call it into life. Few could have believed that while she made the hearts of her audience thrill, that her own had never felt one throb of love—not of that wild, passionate love which breathes throughout that song of Meyerbeer's.

"Brava, carissima," whispered Lady Pamela,

but seeing the singer's eyes full of unshed tears, she stopped.

Exclamations of delight, entreaties for more, surrounded her, but Pamela would not allow it, and taking her cousin's arm, she led her away.

"How fond you seem of music," said Digby, leaning over the sofa, where the cousins sat.

"I am indeed, and it is a pleasure without alloy," she answered.

"I don't know about that. How for those who cannot excel as you do?"

"Is not the charm of listening greater? But you sing yourself, perhaps?"

Digby owned to something of the sort.

"Let us practise some duets to-morrow," she said.

He looked and spoke his thanks, while Miss Wilson sat gnawing her heart in secret rage, preparing poisoned shafts for her rival.

"You have not seen my room," said Pamela, as the ladies went up to bed. "Come with me,"—this to Eveline.

CHAPTER XV.

"Beware the venom clamours of a jealous woman."
SHAKESPEARE.

IT was a charming room, that of Lady Pamela, with all its white lace and pink ribbons; like its mistress, *coquette jusqu'au bouts des ongles.* The dressing-table, ornamented with Dresden looking-glasses and candelabra, a host of gold and cut-glass bottles, and other knick-knacks, was a thing to dream of: the white and gold Psyche, wherein its owner could see that the folds of her invariably perfect toilette were settled to her satisfaction, stood in a favourable light near the window, which was draped with pink velvet and white lace; the writing-table, strewed with every necessary and unnecessary adjunct to correspondence, from the little

Cupid with finger on lip, that kept guard over the golden apple full of ink, to the glass full of hothouse flowers that stood near it, made one pause in wonder how any writing could be achieved there, so covered was it with ornaments. A few gems in water-colours adorned the walls, and a small book-case full of well-chosen authors in more than one language, showed that the Lady Pamela cultivated other tastes besides that of luxury. On each side of the fireplace stood a comfortable *bergère*, in one of which she buried herself, and crossing her slender, high-arched feet on the pink velvet fender-stool, she invited her friend to make herself equally comfortable in the other. After some chat about Gaveston, the coming marriage, the trousseau, and so on, Pamela began :

"You have made an enemy to-night."

"I ?" quoth Eveline : "sorry to hear it. Of whom ? and why ?"

"The *whom*, Miss Wilson. The *why*, Mr. Digby, my laconic friend ; and I rather helped to put a little fuel on her fury. It is so pleasant to put an extinguisher on people's ill-nature."

"Oil on flames! not spoken with your usual discrimination," laughed Eveline.

"Ingrate that you are," said Pamela, in a tragic tone. "But I see you are not up in Beaumanoir politics. Did you remark a *soi-disant* girl dressed *à la vierge?* Ah! I thought so. She talked a good deal to that good-looking Mr. Digby, whom, by the way, you seem to know very well. She wants to marry him."

"Why shouldn't she?" asked Eveline, smothering a yawn.

"Because *he* don't seem to see it. The reciprocity is all on one side."

"Poor Miss Wilson," said Eveline.

"Spare your pity," said Pamela, sarcastically, "there is not much of an *affaire de cœur* there, though I must say she has worked with an energy worthy of better things. Good Heavens! all that trouble to catch a man! Ever since he came she has been singing our ears off, but unless I am much mistaken Ulysses is wide awake. If she had not been so ill-natured about you I would not have made her sing Grisi's song. Was there ever such an exhibition?"

"It was unfortunate, certainly."

"The worst of it is I don't believe *she* saw it; she is so eaten up with vanity that I verily believe she thinks she could eclipse Grisi,—but how you sang to-night, Eveline! I don't think that Mr. Digby will care to listen to *her* again. She thought to have drawn him from the vasty deep, and lo! a widow appeareth who hath already entangled him in her silken nets."

"Don't be absurd, Pamela," laughed her cousin. "Miss Wilson is welcome to marry Mr. Digby as far as I am concerned."

"I do not in the least doubt it. You break hearts without the smallest intention of healing them."

"What on earth have I to do with Miss Wilson's lovers?" exclaimed Eveline, half-inclined to be vexed at the other's badinage.

"You are a dear little innocent woman, and I dare say never saw that you have bewitched my respected papa, as well as the unhappy lawyer, and half the men in the room," said Pamela, ironically. "I don't wonder; you are very lovely, Eveline," she

continued, in her natural voice, looking round at her cousin.

"'A kindred feeling makes us wondrous kind,'" laughed Eveline.

"No, there is no vanity so foolish as that which pretends to what it does not possess. I have my good points, and with careful dressing can make up pretty well, but you are dangerously beautiful, and beware of Miss Wilson; I saw treachery lurking in her eye, and remember—

'Tis the bright day brings forth the adder.'

She was watching you like a cat."

"Our paths are not likely to run counter," replied Eveline, "and I will keep out of Mr. Digby's. I should be very sorry to interfere with anybody's plans, especially in an *affaire de cœur.*"

"Ah, bah!" said Pamela, "*c'est une affaire de tête,* far more dangerous. By the way, how long did Mr. Challenor stay after I left?"

Eveline started, her brows contracted, and her nostrils swelled, but recovering herself, said, "He left immediately after you went, but it is long past midnight, so pleasant dreams to you."

Pamela caught both the hands that were leaning on her chair, and throwing back her head, looked archly at her captive.

"I am answered, *ma mie;* another time you will believe me, I hope. Wait a moment, and Fanchon will light you to bed. The hounds meet here to-morrow, so you will have the happiness of seeing the *élite* of our neighbourhood."

In another room of that large house, sat Constance Wilson alone.

The fire had burnt out, but she had not noticed it, as with clenched hands and set teeth she sat there, thinking with hatred and malice of Eveline and Digby. With the perversity of human nature, no sooner did she perceive that she had lost her game, than she tried to persuade herself she had been on the point of winning it, that it was Mrs. Greville who had robbed her of her lover, oblivious of the fact that only that morning had Mr. Digby made a trifling excuse for not practising some songs with her, and had even refused her kind offer of walking with him after luncheon.

The fact was Miss Wilson's attentions had become rather irksome to the man of law, for

the last day or two, and he was quietly ridding himself of them. She knew it—she had seen it, but it was forgotten in her present wrath.

"To have toiled as I have done, eaten dirt, been at their beck and call, and just as I reached the top step of the ladder to be hurled down by this smooth-faced intriguing widow! It is too hard, and all the weary work to begin over again, or else the miserable poverty at home! Oh! how I hate it! But she shall never be yours, Everard Digby, never! not as long as *I* have a breath of life in me. And it shall go hard with me but what I will do her a nice turn. Only let me watch, and the weapons will be in my hands; and *then*—take care of yourself, Mrs. Greville!" with this charitable injunction Miss Wilson, feeling chilled, sought her couch, where the soft luxurious pillows and mattresses, the fine linen, and thick warm blankets made her involuntarily think of her own hard bed at home, the scanty covering, which made every cloak and shawl a welcome addition, the fireless grate, and all the other little economies of "genteel poverty."

"And if it had not been for her I need

never have encountered them again. Am I always to be thwarted? First by that horrid Mrs. Maynard, and now by this baby-faced widow! never, Everard Digby!" and she drew the bed-clothes closer about her; "I hate and despise you, but you shall *never* marry that woman!"

Let us hope that her dreams were more kindly than her waking thoughts! Meanwhile the cause of all this bitterness was sleeping the peaceful sleep of one untroubled in head, heart, or body.

CHAPTER XVI.

"The hunt is up: the morn is bright and gray,
The fields are fragrant, and the woods are green;
Uncouple here, and let us make a bay,
And ring a hunter's peal!"

SHAKESPEARE.

How Digby spent the night I know not, but it is on record that he, the latest of the late, was first in the breakfast-room next morning. He had heard Eveline, in answer to Lord Okehampton, reply laughingly, "she was a country cousin and accustomed to early hours," and on this had built a vague hope of seeing her before the rest of the party assembled, of holding her little hand in his, and telling her again how she had enthralled him with that song last night. In short, he resolved to say a great many things to her in those precious five minutes on which he had

counted. But in vain he waited; he read his letters, looked at the papers, starting round each time the door opened, but only servants appeared with preparations for the large party expected.

"Hullo! you up, old fellow?" was Lord Gaveston's greeting.

"Digby is nursing his complexion," quoth another.

"No, he hasn't been to bed yet, that's all," said somebody else, chaffing him.

By degrees most of the party made their appearance, and took their places at the well-spread table, amid a buzz of voices and laughter. Presently came a clattering of hoofs on the gravel, spurs clanked, and more men in their red coats (purple-stained tails showing good service), came in amidst various hearty greetings—"The top of the morning to you, old fellow." "Well, Charley, how's yourself?" "All right after that purl, Jones?" and so forth.

"Glad to see you all," was Lord Okehampton's general greeting.

"Good morning, my lord; splendid day for a lady's meet."

"More fit for that than going," said another, shaking his head as he glanced at the bright sunny landscape. "It's as warm as May."

"Well, Phillips, it is all fair that the ladies should have their turn," said Lord Okehampton, good humouredly, and looking round at the many riding-habits that graced his table.

"We have had pretty good sport this season."

"Your lordship has given us some rare good days."

"What a spin we had last Monday!"

"You were not there, Pierce, I think. A good forty minutes without a check, and killed in the open, a regular burster—not half-a-dozen lived through it."

"Which means that you did," replied Pierce.

Digby alone seemed to remark Mrs. Greville's absence, and asked Lady Pamela, next whom he was sitting, where she was.

"Isn't she here?" replied Pamela, looking down her side of the table. "There she is," nodding towards the window, as Eveline, with the children, passed on her way to the hall;

"let us make room for her," she added, drawing her chair further off as the door opened and Mrs. Greville appeared, looking more lovely than ever, in her hat and feather, sealskin jacket, with her dress looped up over as dainty a pair of feet and ankles as ever were encased in make-believe strong boots. The fresh morning air had given her a brilliant colour, and added new lustre and depth to her violet eyes. She stopped for a moment at the door.

"Come here," said Lady Pamela, "come under the shadow of my wing. You look like a frightened stag."

"Not much alarmed," she said, smiling, "only surprised; I forgot the meet, and did not expect such a multitude. Good morning, Mr. Digby," she said to that gentleman, who had started up as she entered.

Her hands were full of ferns and grasses, so the afore-thought-of delight that he had dwelt on of holding her little palm in his was denied him.

Perhaps she remembered Pamela's words over-night; anyhow, that little black kid gauntlet did not rest in his hand.

"Ah! Mrs. Greville, I see you know where to gather roses," said Lord Okehampton.

"And ferns too," she replied, archly, holding out her trophies. "I have been down to the pool with your children."

"What a lovely woman! who is she?" was asked by several of the men. "Who is the lucky owner?"

"The lucky owner is herself, and I have the honour of calling her cousin," replied Lord Gaveston, a trifle haughtily.

"Are we not to see you in the field?" asked her host, the master of the hounds. "I can mount you on a very quiet animal."

"No, thank you, I do not ride," said she.

"Well, of all the quiet little fibbers," began Lady Pamela, but was interrupted by a general rising and a cry of, "Tally ho, here they come!" as hounds, huntsmen, and whippers-in trotted up before the house to show themselves ere proceeding to the meet.

What can be more exhilarating than a good meet in a good hunting country? Let the stay-at-homes and the sceptics say what they will, and discuss the philosophy of hunting at their leisure. Long live the hunt, and long

may it be ere it dies out of merry old England!

It was a brilliant morning. The slight frost that still lingered on the earth was fast dissolving into myriads of fairy rainbows beneath the warm kisses of the joyous sun; a soft southerly breeze dallied with the sparkling blades of grass, heavy with their wealth of glittering jewels; in short, it was the very perfection of a "lady's day."

The crisp earth crackled under the springy, elastic steps of the high-mettled horses as they cantered over the turf; dapper little grooms, walking the glossy hunters up and down, exchanged good-morrows and prophecies on the coming sport, but falling into immediate silence as their masters came up in a hand gallop on their hacks; here and there a farmer trotted up on his more or less symmetrical, but sturdy, enduring animal. A crowd of boys and idlers collected on the spot, some eager to see the sport, some gaping with ever-recurring interest at the goodly scene. Then come the scarlet coats in rapid succession, mingling in brilliant harmony with the green turf, the bright bays, the glossy blacks, the

fretful chestnuts that pawed the earth, and otherwise showed their impatience.

A fair sprinkling too there was of ladies, for Beaumanoir was a show meet, and one or two well-appointed carriages drove up. The crowd rapidly increased, a buzz of expectation was heard, as the arrival of the M. H. was momentarily awaited.

Then came a sound of wheels tearing along the road. In another moment a fiery pair of blood bays dashed almost amid the crowd, seemingly setting at nought the fairy fingers that guided rather than held them. But a child's strength, well managed, tells on the delicate mouths of those thoroughbreds. A sudden check well-nigh brought them on their haunches, as the lady pulled up among the goodly assemblage, to the annoyance of some, but to the amusement and admiration of most; for a pretty woman driving a splendid pair of horses may do a great deal in a hunting country where men are lovers of horseflesh, to say nothing of pretty women; besides, she was daughter to the master of the hounds.

"Good morning, Lady Gwendoline," and a

man in scarlet passed her, as the groom sprang to the heads of her horses.

"By Jove! what a splendid pair!" cried another, with genuine enthusiasm, stopping by the side of the phaeton.

"Are they not a splendid match?" said her ladyship.

"More than one for you; take care you don't come to grief."

"Are you sure they are not too much for you?" said Pierce, riding up, and looking rather nervously at the slight creature in the phaeton, and then at the fretting horses, half-maddened at the crowd around them. It was he who had seen them, spoken of them, and in fine, at Lord Okehampton's request, had purchased them for him, and he felt no little responsibility on seeing Lady Gwen driving them.

"Too much for me?" she repeated, and with pardonable vanity pulled a dog-skin gauntlet from a hand and wrist that might have served for a model, and clenching a tiny fist with a resolute air, "why, I have the strength of Hercules in my wrist!"

"Rather, say, the skill of Phaeton," lisped a dandy, in pink.

"An unlucky simile," laughed Lady Gwen; "did he not come to grief?"

"Hurrah! here they come!" cried a bright-haired boy, cantering up with his father.

A large party was coming across the park, the splendid pack in eager, restless impatience, infusing fresh heart into men and horses. Some few laggards came galloping up. Ladies held their reins somewhat tighter as their horses grew fidgety and began to quiver with impatience. One or two fair cheeks paled perceptibly, and one wondered why on earth they came out hunting. Soon the crowd moves on to covert.

Lady Gwen's steeds were almost ungovernable, so maddened were they at the sight of the hounds. The groom feared to let them go lest they should dash into the midst of the field, and fretting against the restraint, they reared violently; but Lady Gwen sat perfectly calm, soothing them with her voice.

"Let them go, James," she cried.

"Beg pardon, my lady, but the crowd is so

thick there's no room to pass. Better wait a few minutes, my lady."

Pierce had lingered behind, not a little uneasy. He called his groom, who was on his second horse, and dismounting, he bid him take one to Beaumanoir, but to keep about, as perhaps he would hunt later in the day.

Without a word he took his seat by Lady Gwen's side.

"I want to see how they go. Will you take me with you?" he calmly said, not allowing her to see his fear for her. "Your light hand is the very thing for such thoroughbreds."

"You think I cannot manage them?" said Gwen, defiantly.

"On the contrary," said he, leaning back and folding his arms, "am I not trusting myself to you in perfect confidence? What a field is out to-day!" he continued, gazing ahead, apparently quite unconscious that the horses were becoming very violent.

"Jump in," cried Gwen, and this time the groom, reassured by Pierce's presence, did as he was bid, and the two bays, after some plunging, settled into a steady trot.

Meanwhile the field had moved on. The huntsman threw the hounds into covert, cheering them on in a ringing voice. They were not long at fault. A low whimpering soon told the sport was found.

"Hark to Musical! hark! hark!" rang in echoing tones through the air, "Hark to Symmetry! Hark! hark! to Harmony, Harmony!"

One hound after another took up the scent and Reynard's hiding-place soon became too hot for him. He broke away, stealing quietly beneath the hedge-row for a moment, but there was no cheating the keen-scenting hounds—they were on his track directly—and he led gallantly away for dear life, straight as a dart from the bolt, while his enemies dropping into silence settled fairly to him.

"Hold on, gentlemen!" cried the huntsman, as he always does, waving to some whose impatient animals would scarce be held in. "Hold on! Give time! Don't ride over hounds! Now then, they settle to him, the beauties! Now then, sirs, if you please, catch them if you can!"

Away they go in an unbroken line, with heads well down, across the field, down the

hill, while up the acclivity threads the fox at a gallant pace, quickly followed by the unswerving hounds. Brightly gleam the satin coats of the horses, their swelling nostrils and straining eyes telling how ill they brook the restraint upon them. Away they go! The ground trembles under the thunder of their hoofs, nothing to stop them, not till they near the big fence, at the end of the field. Lord Okehampton flies over, Gaveston follows, with a bit of a crash, and looks back to see how Pamela fares. She clears it, with several inches to spare, and they follow side by side. A minute more, and the mass dwindles out of sight, mere specks in the distance. It is a goodly scene, and one that makes the heart bound again.

Gwen followed for some time by the road, then pulling up to reconnoitre, exclaimed, "He will make for Timothy's gorse;" and started like a mad woman down a lane to the left, cheering on her steeds, which partook of their mistress's ardour. They swept past everything, and though never breaking from their trot, the light carriage seemed borne on wings. Away they flew, up hill and down,

without relaxing their pace, while the fairy creature who drove them, steadily held the reins hand over hand, her boasted strength taxed to the utmost, for they were pulling hard now. Pierce lay back, in perfect nonchalance, outwardly, but never losing sight for a moment of the horses, and the little hands that held the reins.

"Tally ho!" he cried, suddenly, as the fox crossed the road, just in front of them.

"Timothy's gorse, as I said," cried Gwen. "I shall beat them yet!" and in her wild impatience she cut the high mettled horses across the haunches; excited as they were, the lash maddened them, and they started at the top of their speed down the road. No hand could check them now, certainly not their driver's.

"A good 'give and take' pull is your only chance," said Pierce, coolly.

Gwen did so, but the result was only to pull her nearly off her seat.

"You had better give me the reins," said Pierce, "there is a steep hill a quarter of a mile on."

"I can hold them," she cried, teeth and brow set.

"As you please," returned the other, leaning back. There was in truth a steep declivity, and the groom turned pale as the carriage went over the brow. A stumble, the least check, and in that headlong course the results must have been disastrous.

This time Pierce did not ask, but with that quiet decision which few women ever resist, he took reins and whip from her. Gwen clasped her hands firmly together, and looked on in silence.

Down they go at top speed—the incline is great—will they reach the bottom in safety?

The traces slacken—the collars drag—another moment, and there must be a horrible crash, and a heap amidst kicking horses.

Lady Gwen turned white, and shut her eyes. The animals were now fairly frightened, for the carriage was overpowering them. Pierce held them in firmly, cheered them with his voice, and touched them with the whip. The pace increases—the traces tighten—another touch, and they go at lightning speed—no running away, but well in hand, and urged on to their utmost efforts.

A minute more, and they reach the bottom

and begin to ascend the opposite side at a gallop, but it soon stops, and the horses, trembling, and in a perfect lather, slowly walk up.

Pierce handed back the reins, and folding his arms, coolly remarked—

"They have nice mouths, but they can pull." At the top of the hill Lady Gwen drew up.

"Thank you," said she, "you did that very well, and saved our lives."

He gave her one look, beneath which hers fell; her fright had somewhat subdued her.

"Here are the hounds, my lady!" cried James, excitedly, pointing to the right, where the stream came on at a splitting pace. They were making rather a circuit, but Lady Gwen saved the angle and drove up as the huntsman rescued poor Reynard's brush from the hungry jaws.

"You were right about this place," said Pierce, who was now standing by her side, "but what made you guess that he would make for it?"

"It was no guess, I saw him break away, and recognised him for the same that gave us

such a splendid run last week, and he ran to earth here. None other had so black a brush with so white a tip."

"After that, none other can claim it, besides you were first in at the death," said Pierce, as, throwing a sovereign in the cap, he took the brush from the huntsman, and brought it to her. "I will not offer my services any more, your horses will go quietly enough," and raising his hat, he went to look for his man, who was sure to be close at hand.

Lady Gwen drove home. She had been vanquished, but somehow it did not vex her. His consummate coolness and skill won her admiration, and had saved her from a horrible accident, and she was very thankful. He had treated the matter so lightly, too—he had behaved well—yes, very well.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Shifting and various is the plan
By which Heaven rules the affairs of man."

COWPER.

THERE was a very large party that evening at dinner. Gaveston took Eveline, and as they crossed the hall, he told her that Vandeleur had arrived.

"I wonder if you will like him; I hope you will, for he is a great friend of mine," said he.

"This Mr. Vandeleur must be very charming, or ought to be," said Eveline, "he seems a universal favourite."

"Well, he is just one of those men that everyone does like; he is an immense favourite with ladies."

"I am not certain—in all deference be it said—that that is a recommendation to our favour," said she, archly.

"Vandeleur is no lady-killer," replied Gaveston, "he is a really good fellow."

Vandeleur having arrived by a late train made a hasty, though, as always, a perfect toilette, and met his hostess as she was bringing up the rear of her guests on their way to the dining-room. He sat a long way down on the same side of the table as Eveline, so she did not see him, and not seeing him forgot his existence.

This was her first dinner-party in England, and she was much amused listening to the various scraps of talk that caught her ear from time to time. Her life abroad, where girls are rarely seen in society, and when seen are rarely heard, was not calculated to make her admire the style of conversation of a fast English young lady, and Miss Kinnaird's shrill accents fell with no little astonishment on her uneducated ears.

This young lady, who sat near her, seemed thoroughly *au fait* with the fashionable scandal of the day, and discussed subjects somewhat *risqués* with an *aplomb* that horrified Mrs. Greville's old-fashioned ideas.

"How shocked you look," said Gaveston,

amused. "I see you do not know many fast young ladies; and, indeed, I know few faster than—" and he inclined his head towards Florence.

"And do you *like* it?" asked Eveline, seriously.

"H—m, it amuses me," said the other. "Now there's Miss Darrell, a pattern little miss, but very slow except when one gets a rise out of her, not very difficult either. You must come and see us at Gaveston. You have never been there even as a child? Well, it is a nice old place. Digby says it ought to be yours."

"Mine!" laughed Eveline, "that must be a great stretch of imagination."

"Do you think *that* is a case?" asked Gaveston.

That, meant Digby and Constance, whom good-natured Lady Okehampton had sent in together, fully persuaded that she had thereby made two people happy.

"I am not a clairvoyante," answered Eveline, laughing. "Is it the custom for ladies in the country to talk so much about hunting? They seem to know as much about it as men."

"How charmingly fresh you are! I see you

have to begin your education," said Lord Gaveston. "After you have been here a month or so, you will be quite as keen about a run as that lady opposite, who has attracted your admiration, I remark."

"Who is she?" asked Eveline, cautiously.

"Lady Dashaway, the great huntress here. She is no great friend of mine, so you need not look so very cautious," he said, with a smile, for Eveline's face was a terrible tell-tale. "That is her husband—for the *chronique scandaleuse*, I refer you to Miss Kinnaird."

"Lord Gaveston," remonstrated Mrs. Greville.

He laughed lightly, and turned to his other neighbour. On her other side was the cheery, handsome Dean of ——, as fond of talking to a pretty woman as any one else, and who, by virtue of his age and cloth, allowed himself any amount of flirting, under the guise of good advice. His wife loved him too well, and was too well assured of his affection, ever to feel the least shadow of annoyance, and if any one ever told her how the Dean had been flirting with some one, she would say with her bright smile, bright still in spite of her forty years,

"Then I am sure she is very pretty. I must be introduced to her."

"What is the Dean lecturing you about?" said Lord Okehampton, "I recognise the tone of old. I was his fag at Eton, Mrs. Greville, so you see I speak *avec connaissance de cause*. Then we went to Christ Church together. He went in for hard study, while I rather preferred hunting and tandem-driving, which used to bring forth solemn lectures from him."

"And they never had the smallest effect on him, Mrs. Greville," retorted the Dean; "he was always in scrapes."

"But never found out," added Lord Okehampton.

"A valuable maxim," said Gaveston, "nothing so fatal as breaking the eleventh commandment."

"Your morals will get quite corrupted here," said the Dean to Mrs. Greville, "I shall have to carry you off to the deanery, and keep you under my own wing."

"There spoke the Dean of ——," said Lord Okehampton, laughing. "He takes especial charge of his lambs, when they are young

and handsome—you will find him a most careful shepherd, Mrs. Greville."

The Dean made some answer in Latin, of which Eveline only caught the words "*offenderis clericum,*" and then old college reminiscences broke in, more amusing to those of their own generation than to her, so she turned her attention to her farther neighbours.

"You are very good-natured, Miss Kinnaird," she heard a gentleman say, very ironically.

"I? *pas si bête,*" she retorted.

"So you were not at the Beeches last week?"

"No. Were you?" responded Miss Kinnaird.

"Yes."

"Who was there? of the cabal I mean," said Florence.

"All," said the gentleman, devoting himself to a *mayonnaise.* "Everybody except Louisa."

"And why didn't Helen ask her?"

"I couldn't make out; there was no end of a row about it, but Talbot was as close as wax; no getting anything out of him."

"He will tell *me,*" said Florence.

"Not even *you*—irresistible as you are. *Helen* might. Women do talk sometimes."

"How charmed you would be if I sat here silent," said Florence, ironically.

"You couldn't if you tried. Don't attempt it—the pensive Madonna style don't suit you."

"I don't go in for sentiment—a bread and butter miss."

One of those universal crashes of voices which occur from time to time at large dinner parties, and in which it would seem that everybody had come to a mutual agreement of talking down everybody else, here drowned each individual voice.

"I agree with you," said Gaveston, reading Mrs. Greville's countenance; "these big feeds are intolerable."

"I never said so," stammered Mrs. Greville, blushing like a girl.

"You only *thought* so," replied Gaveston, laughing, "but it don't do to philosophise on such matters. Take the goods the gods provide,"—here he helped himself to *paté de foie gras*—"and, when the cook *est un mortel divin*—be thankful."

Notwithstanding this advice, she was very glad when Lady Okehampton made the signal to move, for she felt very depressed, and the loss of her good, kind husband came so painfully upon her, that instead of following the ladies to the drawing-room, she sought the privacy of her own room, and here Lady Pamela found her sitting in the semi-darkness of the firelight.

"What is the matter, *ma mie?*" she asked caressingly, and laying her hand on her shoulder.

"Nothing, really; only a fit of low spirits for which I ought to be ashamed of indulging."

"It does not answer, dear," said her cousin, tenderly. "It is a trial for you coming amongst all these people, but you behaved beautifully; and now I dare say that you have been crying and spoiling your pretty face. Ah! I thought so," and relentless Pamela lighted the candles on the mantelpiece, and Eveline with an attempt at a laugh, which was half a sob, got up to bathe her face. "Shall I ring for your maid?"

"Oh no," said Eveline, drying her curls

that had fallen into the water, "I do not want her."

"I wonder how many people believe that all those curls are your own?" said Pamela, watching her cousin brush out the still damp hair and curl it up again. "I don't think you could make yourself ugly if you tried," she continued, taking her arm as they left the room; "most women look hideous after crying: red noses, swollen faces, puffy eyelids. I don't wonder at men hating to see it. Let us go the other way, I hear the men coming out of the dining-room. I must introduce Mr. Vandeleur to you. I think you will find him a congenial spirit; he is rather a flirt, which will be a bond of union."

"I thought you said he was married?"

"*Ca n'empêche pas*—a code of morality which has received royal sanction," replied the other, in a half-sarcastic tone, "and as you will discover for yourself, when you have been through a London season, my unsophisticated friend."

Her Grace of Montserrat being vastly pleased with Mrs. Greville, cast her ducal smiles upon her, and this latter, unconscious of the

existence of Lord Plantagenet, thought her a most charming woman; and few women could make themselves more so than Gertrude Montserrat, when she so pleased.

She was asking Eveline to come on to them when she left Beaumanoir.

"I am afraid I shall be very quiet," she said, "for the duke is abroad, but I can fancy that a quiet visit will be more congenial to you just now. A fresh entrance in the world after a great sorrow is always painful at first —it will wear off—but I have remarked more than once how greatly this crowd oppresses you, poor child."

Mrs. Greville, touched at the kindly sympathy which read her feelings, pressed the duchess's hand; she would have preferred talking with one towards whom she was instinctively drawn, but such a songstress as Mrs. Greville was not allowed to subside in a corner of a sofa in that manner, so, rising to a somewhat clamorous demand, she sat down to the piano.

Not being asked for any particular song, her thoughts wandered to those touching lines of Byron's which have been so beauti-

fully set to music, and which, well known as they are, I may be forgiven for here quoting :

"Bright be the place of thy soul,
No lovelier spirit than thine
E'er burst from its mortal control,
In the orbs of the blessed to shine.

"On earth thou wert all but divine,
As thy soul shall immortally be,
And our sorrow may cease to repine
When we know that thy God is with thee.

"Light be the turf on thy tomb !
May its verdure like emeralds be ;
There should not be a shadow of gloom
In aught that reminds us of thee.

"Young flowers and an evergreen tree
May spring from the spot of thy rest,
But nor cypress nor yew let us see,
For why should we mourn for the blest ?"

More than one eye was moist, as, with a pathos not to be described, the last notes fell quivering from her lips.

"Why, indeed ?" asked a voice at her side, a voice that was strange to her, yet one in which lingered the echo of long-forgotten tones, though when or where heard she could not tell ; but turning, she saw—yes, it was—older, very sunburnt, much altered, but —the gray fisherman of the Welsh river !

"Mr. Vandeleur tells me that he made your acquaintance many years ago," said Lady Pamela. "You never told me this."

"I did not know Mr. Vandeleur by name till this moment," she replied, blushing beautifully, and offering her hand.

"So you really recollected me?" he asked, later in the evening, drawing a chair to her side in the most confiding manner, and completely fascinated by his beautiful companion.

"My recollections of that time are so few," she began, apologising.

"*I* want no excuse for so flattering a memory," he murmured in an undertone. "How strange to meet here after so many years."

"Ah, you prognosticated that," said Eveline, with a blush and a smile.

"I had the advantage in those days—I knew who you were; but now that we know each other, you must accord me the privileges of an old friend who knew you when you were a child—and such a bright, happy child!" his voice had the old dangerous tone, caressing, yet respectful, and which again thrilled through her.

"And what has become of the old Welsh squire? I forget his name, but he had a deaf and dumb son."

"The old man is dead, and the son spends his time chiefly in Scotland and Norway."

"Lady Pamela tells me that you live the life of a recluse down there," continued Vandeleur.

"I love the place. It is my home; and all those who were dearest to me sleep in its peaceful churchyard."

"You have had much sorrow since those early days," said Vandeleur, his eyes and voice rather than his words saying how he longed to dry the tears that trembled on the dark lashes.

"My sorrows have been indeed great, yet there are harsher ones in the world, and I am ungrateful to complain."

Pamela had glanced more than once at them, as absorbed in their conversation, one, at all events, she felt sure, was unconscious of the conspicuousness that they were attaching to themselves, and seeing the tear-laden eyes raised for a moment and then droop beneath

Vandeleur's look, she was too true a friend not to come at once to the rescue.

"Mr. Vandeleur, Lord Gaveston wants your opinion on the drawings of some carriages that have come on approval. Will you give him the benefit of your good taste?"

Few things pleased him better than such an appeal. Lady Pamela knew this, and she took the chair he vacated, with the satirical smile that too often hovered on her ripe lips.

Not unmarked had been that flirtation. Miss Wilson at once made it her business to learn all that she could of Mr. Vandeleur and his antecedents, and a cruel light came into her eyes, as with the prescience of hatred and envy, she thought that already she detected a beacon. Seeing the circle that drew round Mrs. Greville, she hated her—hated her for her soft beauty, for her winning ways, for her fascinating manner, and for the wealth that could command every wish, and she longed, she said, to see that proud head in the dust.

Vandeleur was *en pays de connaissance*, and so many of the guests engrossed him, that he could not again approach the lovely

Mrs. Greville; but when the ladies were retiring, he found himself at the door as she passed, and pressed her hand with a warm lingering clasp as he wished her good-night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Here nymphs relate
The dark decrees and will of fate."
MATTHEW GREEN.

"Is it not strange that your Admirable Crichton and my gray fisherman are one and the same man?" said Mrs. Greville, settling herself in an arm-chair in Lady Pamela's room. "Why does not his wife come with him?"

"It might be better if she did," said the other, dryly.

"Does she not care for him? Surely she must: he seems so very kind."

"Kind manners in public don't always make happy homes in private," quoth Lady Pamela. "Not but what I believe that Mr. Vandeleur is kind to his wife when they are together,

which is not very often. But of *her* feelings I cannot speak. He belongs to her, and that invests him with a halo in her eyes; but I suppose that she is fond of him, for she is very jealous. Not without cause, if all be true."

"Jealousy hardly proves love," replied Mrs. Greville. "You remember what Rochefoucauld says: 'Il y a dans la jalousie plus d'amour propre que d'amour; il y a une certaine sorte d'amour dont l'excés empêche la jalousie.' I can fancy that. Perfect love cannot feel distrust, and what is jealousy but distrust?"

"Perhaps," replied Pamela, musing; "but also it is a feeling *plus fort que soi*. *I* could be jealous."

"Most unjustifiable, if you were," laughed her cousin.

"Gaveston is fond of me," said Pamela, dreamily, as if thinking of something else. "Eveline, were you ever in love?"

"I loved my husband very dearly."

"That is evading my question. I know that you loved him, and how devoted you were to him in that trying illness. But were

you ever really in love? You know what I mean."

Eveline shook her head. There seemed almost a treachery to the dead in such an admission, and she made it silently.

"Then remember my advice. Only give your love to a man who is worthy of it—who will treasure it as a priceless gift; for of all beautiful things, a woman's love is the most so. There may be men worthy of it, though I have never met one. When you love, Eveline, it will be with all your heart and soul—with hopeless idolatry. I came on a passage in Owen Meredith to-day, which struck me as applicable to you, so I learnt it by heart for your benefit,

> 'Nor do I question what thou art,
> Nor what thy life in great or small.
> Thou art, I know, what all
> My heart must beat or break for.'

That will be *your* feeling when you fall in love."

"You do not seem to allow me any discrimination in my choice," laughingly said Mrs. Greville.

"My dear, people have none when they

fall in love," said Pamela, sententiously. "Nobody loves a being as he or she is, but clothes some ideal with a human form that takes the fancy,

> 'Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
> Love can transpose to form and dignity.'"

"I do not at all agree," rejoined Eveline, warmly.

"Naturally," returned Pamela, "seeing by your own confession that you never have had the disease. But how else do you account for those awakenings from dreams — those perceptions of faults where virtues dwelt before? *They* did not spring suddenly into life; they had existed all along, only that we did not—would not—see what was patent to all the world till some cause or other unbound our own eyes."

"Yet I think I could see the faults, and love the man all the same," said Eveline, in her half shy manner when talking of her feelings.

"Not a bit of it," replied Pamela; "you would believe in him firmly—deem each fault a virtue—and all the rest of the rubbish with which women will shut their senses, till some

day the lovely bubble bursts, and then they see that they have been worshipping nothing but a drop of soapy water."

"You speak bitterly, Pamela. Surely, Gaveston is not the soapy drop?" said Eveline, wistfully.

"No; he is better than I deserve. I was not thinking of him: indeed, I was not thinking of any one in particular; I spoke generally, for I see that you will have plenty of adorers at your feet—only be sure and select the right one. Your heart is too good a one to be made a man's plaything of."

"According to your theory, I shall not have much option in my choice; but when I want a garb for the ideal hero who is to steal not only my peace but my common sense, I will come to you to select him," said Mrs. Greville, laughing.

"Would to Heaven you would!" replied Pamela, more seriously than the occasion seemed to warrant. "Could women only exercise a little common sense in such matters, there would be less misery in the world. But there, my dear, we are all alike in that matter," she added, *en bâdinant*, "and you will

be far above the clouds long before you tell me, while I shall be making frantic but ineffectual clutches at the tail of your skirt. Good gracious, it is to-morrow morning!—let us go to bed."

CHAPTER XIX.

Hero. "But nature never framed a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice:
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes
Misprising what they look on. * * *
* * * * She cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
She is so self-endeared."

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

Pro. "Even as one heat another heat expels,
Or as one nail by strength drives out another,
So the remembrance of my former love
Is by a newer object quite forgotten.
* * * * *
At first I did adore a twinkling star,
But now I worship a celestial sun."

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

WHEN Vandeleur and Gaveston met in the passage on their way to the smoking-room the former spoke most rapturously of Mrs. Greville.

"She is very lovely, is she not?" said

Gaveston, "I thought you would like her. She and Pam are great chums."

Mrs. Greville haunted Vandeleur's thoughts all that night, waking or sleeping he saw those glorious blue eyes before him, and the lovely bashful look, as she recognised him; and he resolved not to allow her evident liking for him to fade away through any fault of his. He knew women well, and was fond of them —well he might be, for they had treated him far too kindly, and more than one *lèse-majesté* had been forgiven in an ensuing friendship.

And his wife? I hear my readers exclaim. Ay, his wife, for this gay Lothario was a married man. Perhaps had she been of a more congenial nature, Vandeleur might have developed into a better man; but hers was a cold, hard, suspicious nature, with a stern, uncompromising sense of duty, which, with her, took the place of affection. Untempted herself, she made allowances for none—the least deviation from the right path was visited by her as an unpardonable enormity—and whatever the world might say of her husband, no breath had ever touched Mrs. Vandeleur.

"Not prudery's self could e'er have found
Against her, accusation's ground,
Nor pity's self could e'er have traced
One virtue that her heart had graced,
'Twixt vice and virtue, both sedate,
She only was——immaculate."

How little when we pride ourselves on our own strength and truth, do we take into consideration the extraneous circumstances that keep them intact.

We think ourselves an impregnable—an unassailable fortress, and forget the moat that surrounds it, the garrison that guards it. But let down the draw-bridge—take away the brave and gallant guard, and what becomes of the stronghold that erstwhile so proudly boasted of its strength? The castle is the same—its strength or its weakness unaltered; but the outward support is gone.

So with us women—too often do we rear our heads in conscious pride of our own virtue, our unsullied life, and draw our skirts around us with a scornful shudder, as we pass one, who — less fortunate than ourselves — was compelled to stand alone, and has fallen. We have no pity—none. She ought to have taken care of herself; she was old enough.

True she ought—as we all ought to do many things, *and fail.* But when we condemn so pitilessly, do we ever pause to think of the strong wall that loving hands—or may be circumstances—have built around our immaculate selves? Do we ever remember that an unseen influence has kept temptation from us—not that we have resisted it? Does it ever occur to us that were we left alone and undefended, it is just possible that we, too, might succumb? That we are often strong because—untempted?

Let none think that I am defending sin—God forbid; but I would claim some pity for the sinner, who, for aught we know, carries about a bitterer punishment than any we can inflict. Let us all be thankful that there is another tribunal besides that of the social Eumenides, where *all* will need—and obtain—mercy.

Mrs. Vandeleur did her duty by her husband—in her own estimation—to her children and to her parents, whom she had refused to leave on her marriage; but somehow she had not been successful in making virtue lovely, and though she shuddered at the thought of

pitying a sinner, and washed her hands of such, and thanked Heaven she was not as they, no one would say to her,

"Why do people love you?
And wherefore are you gentle, strong, and valiant?"

Mrs. Vandeleur's is not a singular character: there are many like her. Their marriage had not been one of predilection, but it was one which offered many worldly advantages, and had been accepted on those terms. Perhaps he did not find his wife so charming on nearer acquaintance as he had supposed, or perhaps the chains of matrimony slightly galled the gay butterfly; anyhow, as she preferred living with her parents, he returned a good deal to his bachelor habits, and with bachelor habits came bachelor thoughts.

It is to be hoped that his wife lived in ignorance of her lord's doings—probably she did, for it would never have occurred to her that anyone belonging to her *could* be other than immaculate. He wrote her a daily letter in his absences, he had an enormous respect for her, and rarely flirted in her presence. With his light easy temperament, and somewhat elastic morality, and with that ideal appreciation of

good—common to irresolute characters, who admire without attempting to imitate—Mrs. Vandeleur was the very woman to inspire him with the deepest respect, and she was by no means singular in her belief that a man who so admires what is great and noble in others, must possess those attributes himself.

Everything went on very pleasantly in their *ménage*, she had plenty to do at home ; and he loved to be caressed and *dorloté* by women of the world, who always welcomed the charming Mr. Vandeleur in their circles. Many and very sentimental had been his flirtations, but not till he saw Mrs. Greville did he think that he had ever seen his *beau idéal;* but then she stood before him. He did not analyse his thoughts—he was not much given that way —but she filled them, she had bewitched him, and he looked forward to a very delightful, confiding friendship between himself and this lovely woman.

CHAPTER XX.

"The hearts of old gave hands,
But our new heraldry is—hands, not hearts."
SHAKESPEARE.

SIR HUMPHREY PIERCE was leaving Beaumanoir, but he was no nearer knowing his fate than he had been for the last year. It was not to be borne, and he was determined to have it out with Gwen before he left. The difficulty was to get a *tête-à-tête* with her. Surrounded by her satellites, she was as difficult of access as any one of the luminaries above. Though it galled him horribly, he determined to ask Florence Kinnaird to help him. Anything was better than this suspense, in which pride was as much galled as love.

The ladies were in the library. Some few of the men, finding metal more attractive there than in the stables, had joined them,

and were idling away the morning as best they could. Some of the ladies were working, others writing; Eveline was sketching the view from the window; Pamela sat near her, knitting, the one feminine work she affected; Gwen and Florence doing nothing; Vandeleur, with the ease of a thorough man of the world and a spoilt one, had drawn his chair close to Eveline, as if it were a matter of course that he should do just as he liked; Gaveston was occupied in unwinding Pamela's ball of worsted.

"I wish you would come out, Pam," said he; "it really is a shame to waste this fine day."

"I hate going out before luncheon," she replied; "men are so idle they never have anything to do if their guns and horses are not available. Now, just look at my wool!" and with a comical look of dismay she took up the tangled mass into which he had converted it.

"What on earth is a fellow to do?" asked he, plaintively.

"Look at Mr. Digby," retorted Pamela; "see how he studies the paper—the politics of his country! Now, *that* I call improving."

"I don't believe he has read a word," replied Gaveston, *sotto voce*. "Digby," cried he, aloud, "any news in the paper?"

Digby lowered the *Times*, from behind which he had been covertly watching Mrs. Greville, and encouraging a very cordial dislike to Vandeleur; but he was not a man to be taken unawares, and he quietly replied,

"I was looking over a case I am interested in. No," he continued, folding the sheet carefully, and running his eye over it. "Nothing much—there never is at this time of year. There is a good deal about the Franco-Sardinian marriage."

"He got out of that very well," whispered Gaveston; "he never once turned the paper; I watched him."

"Gwen, this is awfully slow," said Florence; "I do think mornings among dowagers ought to be prohibited. Come and have a game of billiards."

"What a restless being you are," said Gwen; "can't you be quiet for once?"

"It is lawyers who can't be quiet," said Florence. "Mr. Digby, you are a lawyer. Do you know why? Gwen, I can't stop to

give the answer—come along," and the two young ladies left the room, followed by Pierce and one or two others.

"What's the answer?" was asked, as soon as they were outside the door.

"Because they lie first on one side, then on the other, and even in the grave they lie still," replied Miss Kinnaird.

Gwen turned upon her:

"It is well you did not say that before Mr. Digby, *our* guest."

"Well, I didn't; I told you I couldn't," said Florence.

"Now or never," thought Pierce. "Miss Kinnaird," he said aloud, "as you are fond of riddles, will you read me this one?"

Florence lingered behind. She knew well enough it was no common riddle that he wanted answered.

"What is it?" she asked.

"It is to ask your help. Will you give it me?"

"*My* help, Sir Humphrey? What for?"

"To procure me an interview with Lady Gwendoline. I am leaving Beaumanoir to-

day, and I must speak to her. Will you help me ?"

"How on earth am I to do so? If Gwen does not choose to give you this *tête-à-tête,* what can I do ?"

"A woman's wit never yet failed her," said Pierce. "Ask her to come out riding—anything—and then leave us."

"And make Gwen quarrel with me ? No, thank you," said the young lady, shaking her head ; "that don't suit my book at all."

"Why should she quarrel with you ? A clever woman like you would never betray herself."

"I don't know," replied Miss Kinnaird ; "and Gwen is as sharp as forty needles. She would never forgive me. No ; you must manage it yourself."

"How can I?" retorted Pierce; "you never leave her for a moment."

As he spoke, he took a small morocco case out of his pocket and absently opened it.

"How lovely !" exclaimed Florence, as the sunlight danced on the diamonds. "Is that for Gwen ?"

"I don't know. Would *you* like it ?" He

asked this with a look that Florence understood. It might be hers; and, after all, what he asked was nothing so very much. She hesitated, and seeing her hesitation, he clasped the bracelet on her arm, sneering at the woman the while.

"Let it stay there, and do what I ask you."

Florence coloured, wavered, looked at the bracelet: it was too handsome to part with.

"If I do what you ask, you will keep faith with me?" she said.

"Men don't break faith, whatever women do," said he, contemptuously.

"I don't know that," retorted Florence. "I don't think men ever keep faith with women, though in this case *you* have most to lose; for Gwen would despise a man who could not fight his own battles."

"Diamond cut diamond! yes, or no?"

"Well, yes," decided Florence, looking at the bauble.

Pierce strolled back to the library.

Florence stayed a few moments, and then ran up to her own room to lock up her bracelet. It would never do to show it yet.

"And after all, I don't see why Gwen should not put him out of his misery. I don't believe she will accept him, but that's not my affair, and I think I see the way to doing a stroke of business for myself."

Thus soliloquizing, Miss Kinnaird walked into the billiard-room where a noisy party was playing pool.

"You're a nice one! you propose billiards and then shirk," said Bob Markham.

"Not a bit of it. Here, I'll join the pool," replied Florence, taking a cue.

"What is every one going to do this afternoon?" she presently asked, as she made a clever stroke.

"My lord said we were to shoot the home coverts after luncheon," said Bob, taking aim at his ball.

"Hullo, Bob! you are yellow, not red!" was shouted at him.

"What a pity," replied he, crossing over to the other side of the table; "the red lies there so nicely."

"Florence, you and I will drive in the

pony-carriage, and do some shopping," said Gwen. "Is it my turn?"

"Shopping in the village is awful slow," said Miss Kinnaird, balancing her cue in her hand. "Let's ride."

"What's the good of riding? the hounds are not out to-day," replied Lady Gwen.

"I want to see the old castle again, to finish my sketch," rejoined Florence; "I don't draw like Mrs. Greville, but I should like to do the old ruins. By-the-way, Mr. Twyrrhitt," she added, turning to a more than middle-aged man, who for some time past had been much taken with the liveliness of Miss Kinnaird, "you are a great judge of the picturesque; do come and give me the benefit of your advice. Have you seen Mrs. Greville's portfolio? I never knew an amateur draw like her."

Mr. Twyrrhitt thought her very amiable to so warmly praise in another the talent she confessed she could not emulate; and, pleased at the opinion she had of his advice, said he thought that she drew very nicely herself.

"Oh, no; I am fond of it, but I have no talent," said she modestly. "Gwen, will you

come? and if Mr. Twyrrhitt does not care about shooting, could he not come with us?"

"By all means, if he likes," said Lady Gwen.

"Oh, *do*, Mr. Twyrrhitt; you are such a judge, and I am dying for your opinion," cried Florence, enthusiastically.

The Lady Gwen raised her eyebrows and played her stroke.

"Don't die, Miss Kinnaird," said one of the men; "we can't spare you."

"Don't be a fool," replied the young lady to him; and turning to Mr. Twyrrhitt, she received his assurance that he should be charmed to accompany her.

The gong here summoned them to luncheon, and the game was hurriedly ended.

Pierce—hat and whip in hand—lounged into the hall as the party emerged from the billiard-room.

"What, off, Pierce?" said Lord Okehampton. "Come and have some lunch first."

"Thankee, no, I must get home," said Pierce, "I am expecting some fellows at my place, and I have only time to pay my devoirs to my lady."

"There she is," said Lord Okehampton, as the ladies, obedient to the gong, left the library for the dining-room. "Duchess, let me offer my arm."

As Pierce crossed over to Lady Okehampton he stopped to pick up a glove which Florence dropped.

"Three o'clock—Rougemont Castle—Gwen, Twyrrhitt, and myself," was hurriedly whispered to him.

Pierce made no sign, presented the glove to Miss Kinnaird, and went up to Lady Okehampton, said a few civil words to her, and bowing somewhat distantly to Gwen, took his leave.

Gwen shrugged her shoulders, and went into luncheon.

"So you are making up to that old man, Flo," said she, as somewhat later they came down the lobby, dressed for riding.

"Might do worse; he's awfully rich."

"How you *can* make up to a man," quoth Gwen, "*I* don't know."

"Well I never!" ejaculated Florence, "How many men have you got dangling on *your* hook?"

"*Their* doing, not *mine*," said her ladyship, buttoning her glove. "Here is Mr. Twyrrhitt."

They had ridden about four or five miles, when Pierce crossed their path, expressing surprise, but more pleasure at so fortunate a meeting; he joined Lady Gwen—the two others rather lingering behind.

Presently he rode forward to open a gate which obstructed their way, but his horse objected to the proceeding, and turning sulky swerved each time that he approached it.

Pierce at last caught the latch with the crook of his whip, and then the brute, determined not to be done, jammed himself upon the gate, crushing his rider's leg against the post.

Pierce lost his temper, and a desperate struggle ensued. Restrained as by a vice between his rider's knees, and by the iron hand that gave him no chance of getting his head, the horse staggered beneath the blows that fell like rain, now on his flanks, now on his shoulders, but still refused to approach the gate, and viciously endeavoured to crush his master against the wall, but Pierce stuck out his foot, and not all the animal's strength could break down the barrier.

It was rather a grand sight, this struggle between brute force and human will, as with dogged resolution each strove for the mastery.

Again and again the horse cowered to the ground, but was recovered by the man's consummate horsemanship ; he turned, he backed, he reared, but could not escape the shower of blows that fell without mercy ; then gathering his legs altogether he gave a buck-jump that would have unseated many a rider, but Pierce sat him like a centaur ; his bronzed face was sallow with anger; he would conquer the beast if he stayed there all night—an event which looked not unlikely, as the horse, in a lather, with great weals standing out on his skin, resolutely refused to approach the gate in question.

"Let me open it," said Gwen, at last, sickened at the sight.

"No ! he *shall* do it !" replied Pierce, from between his teeth. "It is sheer vice."

"This is quite horrible," said Florence, as fresh punishment fell like hail on the horse.

He gave in at last—broken, subdued, and cowed—but very sulky, and darted back from the cause of contention; but warned by a heavy blow on his bruised body, he at last allowed

Pierce to hold open the gate, while the others rode through.

Humphrey apologised to Gwen for punishing his horse in her presence, "but I could not let him get the better of me," he said.

"Poor brute! you have beaten him to a jelly," said she; "but, horrible as the sight was, I own to being fascinated, as I wondered which would conquer."

"Did you think that *I* should give in?" asked he, *avec intention*, "I *never* give in where I have resolved; *never*, Lady Gwen."

A shiver passed through her, he frightened her; she put her horse to a gallop.

Arrived at the ruins, they put their horses up at the farm, and wandered off in search of the view that Miss Kinnaird wanted.

It was no difficult matter to separate, the less so as Gwen thought the ride had been proposed for Florence's especial benefit, and she fell into the trap at once.

"What do you think, Mr. Twyrrhitt, is the light better here?"

Mr. Twyrrhitt thought it would be better a little farther on—where they were quite out of sight of the two others.

"What an advantage it is to have so good

a judge to help me," said Florence, artlessly. "I never have any one to help me in anything. You know I am an orphan, and though my uncle and aunt are very kind to me, you know it is very different to having a mother to care for and love me."

Florence was getting quite sentimental, and heaved a sigh.

"But surely you have many who love you?" said her cavalier, touched at the forlorn picture that she had conjured up for his benefit.

"People are very kind to poor little me, but—*love!*" and the tone of her voice spoke volumes.

"Poor little thing!" said he, pityingly, edging nearer to her and looking at the sad profile that was bent over her drawing.

She had much ado to keep her countenance.

"But I must not weary you with my sorrows," she said, looking up with a mournful, beseeching smile, that made the old fellow's heart throb in the most unusual way.

"You don't weary me," said he, tenderly.

("It's coming now," thought Florence.)

"You don't weary me, but I don't like to think that you are unhappy."

"It is very wrong to tell you all this, but

you are so kind and sympathising," and she gave him a grateful look. "I always try to laugh and look gay—it is the only return I *can* make for Lady Okehampton's great kindness, but it is very hard work sometimes to smile with an aching heart."

"You make mine ache to hear you. I cannot bear to think that you, so young, so pretty, should carry a load of care about with you," responded Mr. Twyrrhitt.

"Forget what I said," replied Florence, with an admirable imitation of a little hysteric laugh—"forget what I said; I like to think that I have your sympathy and friendship, that will be a great happiness to me. Is this right?" and sighing deeply as if trying to put self aside in that one gasp, she handed him her block.

He took it, but did not look at it; on the contrary, he laid it down and took her hand instead.

"Miss Kinnaird, Florence, will my sympathy, my friendship, ay! more than that, my love, really make you happy? I am old enough to be—well—much older than you are, but could my love content you? Could

you be happy as an old man's wife ?" he added, yet more tenderly, and her head drooping forward, he was encouraged to pass his arm round her.

"Oh! Mr. Twyrrhitt, you are too good to me," she murmured; "who would not be happy as your wife? One so good and noble as you are!"

Much more was said, till Florence, who, having gained her point, was somewhat bored, proposed rejoining Lady Gwendoline.

"Not yet, dearest, *my own* Florence now," replied her lover; "who knows, they may be as happy as we are."

"What, with that dreadfully cruel man ?" exclaimed Florence, with a charming little shudder, and drawing a little nearer, as if for protection, to her elderly swain.

"Darling!" he whispered.

"These are quaint old ruins, are they not ?" said Gwen, looking idly round; "what novels call 'frowning.'"

"I dare say many a brow has frowned here, and many a shriek arisen from that dungeon," said Pierce. "It is no doubt a subterranean

place, where man's vengeance has wreaked itself ere now."

"What a very unpleasant idea," said Gwen.

"In former days men made their own laws, and rendered account to no one. Less civilised than the present age, they rarely put a bridle on their passions either for good or evil," said Pierce.

"Perhaps people felt more keenly in those days."

"I doubt it," replied Pierce; "we hide our feelings better now, but, believe me, the human breast is torn by pangs and hopes as fierce now as in the days of the old crusaders. Civilisation makes us less lawless, but not less keen of feeling, nor less susceptible of beauty's power—and beauty's cruelty," he added, in a lower tone.

"Where can Florence have gone?" said her ladyship, about to rise.

"Stay, Lady Gwen," interposed Pierce, "they are very happy, I can see them through this loop-hole; it would be cruel to break such an interesting *tête-à-tête*."

"Surely Florence is not turning that old man into ridicule!" cried Gwen.

"Not now, at any rate. I know that *he* is fascinated, for he said last night in the smoking-room that Miss Kinnaird was the most artless, charming girl he had ever seen."

Gwen sank back on her stony seat, and began decapitating the long blades of grass with her dainty whip. She knew it was coming. Should she await it or not? For a whole year she had baffled him; should she still do so, or make an end of it? The master passion got the best of the argument, and she looked up at him with a defiant, *mutine* expression, and met a gaze that made her eyes droop. She was but a woman after all.

Pierce saw his advantage, and knew that the day was his own.

"Lady Gwendoline, I told you a little while ago that I never faltered where I had resolved. Till I saw you I never saw the woman I cared to call my wife; but then I swore that no other woman would I marry, and that no man but myself should ever call you his."

"I think you threaten me, Sir Humphrey," said Gwen, with a haughtiness one hardly could have expected from so small and fair a creature.

"Far from it," said he, very softly, "I simply tell you the resolution I made. I cannot compel you to be my wife, but by the Heaven above," he added, vehemently, "you shall belong to no other man! Even were it at the steps of the altar, I would drag him from you! Gwendoline, you *must* be mine."

She had started to her feet, and drawing herself up against the wall, looked at him with a cold defiance, to which no words can do justice.

"That is for *me* to decide," she said.

She looked very lovely standing there, calmly confronting him. Her flaxen hair and fair throat stood in admirable relief from the rich, brown madder of the old ruined wall, against which she leant. Not a particle of fear, which many a woman would have felt, lingered in her cold light-blue eyes, which were fixed on her lover. She looked more like some spirit that would vanish at an earthly touch, than a mortal woman.

"Forgive my rough wooing," said he, more humbly, but looking at her with an admiration he did not attempt to conceal, "but you have made me desperate, and for a year past

have driven me nearly beside myself. Be merciful now, Lady Gwen. You know your power. You have made me suffer enough. Will you not make amends at last?"

A faint smile stole over her face; she liked to have that stern, lawless man humbled before her, and she watched her triumph with pleasure, while he, almost trembling, waited for the words that should decide his fate.

She held out her hand.

"Let it be peace," she said.

"Peace!" he exclaimed. "There is no peace in such happiness as this!" and before she could have imagined such an outrage, he had caught her to his breast, and had passionately kissed her lips.

"How dare you?" she cried, indignantly, as she released herself.

"Forgive me, dearest, how could I help it?" with more humility in his words than in his voice.

"You had better ride home now, Sir Humphrey," said Gwen, coldly.

"Surely I may ride back with you?" cried he.

"Certainly not. Nor for several days need

you give yourself the trouble of calling at Beaumanoir ; besides you have your shooting party to attend to."

Lady Gwen was firm, and Sir Humphrey was forced to leave her, and she sat musing some little time alone.

"At all events it is done," she said. "It is getting horribly cold. Florence ! Florence ! where are you?" she cried. "Are you not frozen? I am," she continued, as she saw them. They had started up on hearing her voice. "I am sure you must both be perished sitting here, drawing ; *quant à moi* a fire and a book would be pleasanter ;" she shivered as she spoke.

"Dear Gwen, I am *so* sorry, but a good gallop will warm us. Let us go for the horses," said Florence, "doing" a little bit of modest shyness. "Where is Sir Humphrey ?"

"Gone home long ago," replied Gwen, carelessly, as she sprang into her saddle from a stone.

Florence was assisted to hers by Mr. Twyrrhitt, and Gwen saw at a glance how it was with them.

"I suppose I may congratulate you," said she, when they reached home.

Florence nodded. "It is all settled; come to my room and talk it over," said she, anxious to learn the result of Pierce's interview, and above all to find out whether he had betrayed her.

"No, I am going for some tea," said Gwen, carelessly, and turning into the library.

Florence felt uncomfortable, for she could not make out from her friend's manner whether she suspected her intervention or not; and she knew that Lady Gwen would never forgive her for entrapping her, as she would call it, into an interview with any one, no matter what the result might be.

But selfish as Gwen was, and great as were her faults, she came of a race that knows not what deceit nor underhand dealing are, and she had not the remotest notion that Pierce and Florence had been in league against her.

When her mother went to dress for dinner, Gwen went with her. Young ladies when they "tell mamma," are apt to burst into tears and her arms at the same time—at least, so one reads — but Gwen was not of the romantic order. Finding her mother's maid

in her dressing-room, she desired her to leave them for a little time.

"I will soon deliver my lady to your tender mercy, Dawes; but I want to speak to her now, and you can cogitate meantime."

"Law! my lady," said the old servant, "I suppose that's one of them French words, but I am too old to learn them now."

"Not too old to learn French taste, Dawes. You made her ladyship quite a guy last night, with that mass of ribbons and flowers. Don't put so much top-hamper on to-night; and now be off with you, like a good soul."

"Did I really look so badly dressed, my dear?" asked her mother; "I thought Dawes did my head rather nicely."

"And so she does, mother; only I like to bully Dawes, she looks so very respectful—never very sure if I am in earnest or not. Poor old Dawes! how angry she used to be with me in the nursery! I think she grew a little awed when I became 'my lady.'"

Lady Gwen stood by the fire, one foot on the fender, while her mother sank into a fauteuil and warmed her feet.

"Mr. Twyrrhitt has proposed to Florence, and she has accepted him," began Gwen.

"Dear me, Gwen, surely he is very old for her, and she is so *very* lively," remonstrated Lady Okehampton.

"They have settled it, anyhow; so you will have to think of some wedding presents, mother."

"My dear, are they going to be married directly?" said Lady Okehampton, aghast.

"I daresay they will wait a day or two," laughed Gwen. "They only settled it this afternoon. And, mother, Sir Humphrey has proposed to me."

"And you?" said her ladyship, her breath taken away by the suddenness of the two events.

"And I—have accepted him."

"I never guessed you liked him, my dear. Of course, I saw he admired you; but, Gwen, is this for your happiness?" said the mother, anxiously.

"I hope so, mamma. Don't look so solemn," said Gwen, lightly.

"I don't know why, but I am always a

little afraid of Sir Humphrey," said Lady Okehampton, nervously.

"Only because he is rather silent and very dark," laughed Gwen. "No need for fear, mother; and you will acknowledge his birth is undeniable, and his place the finest in the county."

"True, my dear," said the gentle lady; but her maternal instinct told her he was not a kindly-natured man, and she feared for her child.

"Will you tell 'my lord,' mother?"

"Isn't Sir Humphrey here, my dear? No; I remember, he went away to-day. Surely, he ought to have told your father before he left."

"Perhaps he would, only there was nothing to tell then, mamma. We met him out riding, and I would not let him come back with us. And now I will ring for the venerable Dawes, or you will be late for dinner."

"Did Mr. Digby also propose to Miss Wilson? *He* went to-day."

"Not that I know of," said Gwen: "and I think, mother, you must give up that dream. He has not the smallest intention of proposing

to Miss Wilson. If he proposes to any one, it will be to Mrs. Greville. Remember what I told you about top-hamper, Dawes," added Gwen, laughing, as she left the room.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Il y a des symptômes d'amour aussi sur que des symptômes de maladie : on a froid, on a chaud en même temps : on est du même sentiment, on se rencontre dans la façon de juger ; on approuve les mêmes choses ; on aime les mêmes gens ; on aime les lieux où l'on a commencé à s'aimer et tout cela sans qu'on s'en doute." —PRINCE DE LIGNE.

DURING the ensuing week, most of the guests at Beaumanoir had taken their departure ; and as the three pairs of lovers were a good deal engrossed with each other, Vandeleur, who still remained, was thrown very much into Mrs. Greville's society, and finding a great deal in common, they were gradually led into an intimacy more fascinating than prudent—all the more dangerous, that Eveline was too pure-hearted to give a thought to the possibility of evil arising from a plea-

sant, kindly friendship. All was bright and sunny, and there was no one standing by with the lead to warn her of the gradual shallowing of the waters over which she was sailing so confidently.

Friendships between man and woman are always dangerous, though the parties most concerned never believe this till too late; and here let me remark that such friendships only occur when the hearts of both are unoccupied —hence the cause of peril. These sentimental friendships never take place where the soul has found its sister—when the sympathy for which it craves is legitimately supplied.

And love comes so gently, so softly, that the poor, deluded mortals walk blindly on, getting more and more entangled in the golden web, till, one day, their eyes are suddenly opened, and they find that the flimsy fetters have become adamantine chains which they are powerless to break. And if these fetters bind them to those to whom they have no right to be bound, woe betide the day of reckoning when the golden chains are snapt asunder! For they *will* be snapt by one of the two—leaving the other one staring, gaping

aghast at the awful ruin everywhere. In vain will this last one shrink from the bitter truth, and shut eyes and heart to the horrible reality. It cannot be hidden. The pedestal on which had stood the beloved idol is vacant—nothing remains but the broken fragments of the fetters wherewith the two had once been bound. And what remedy is there? *None!*

The sunshine of life is gone—a dark and dreary night has usurped the brilliant day, and the burden—a crushed and hopeless heart—must be borne till life's journey is over; and if the loss of self-esteem be added to such misery, angels may well weep over the ruin.

And did Vandeleur not know the danger he was bringing on that fair, trusting woman? God knows.

I do not know the workings of men's hearts. They have never been laid bare to me, save sometimes in the bitter remorse of death-bed repentance, and such moments give but little insight to what the human heart may feel in hours of happiness and self-indulgence.

We women are apt to deify a man into a

perfect being the world ne'er saw; or run into an opposite extreme, and accredit him with a cruelty and baseness which he as little deserves; so I will leave Vandeleur's feelings alone, and simply state facts as I know them, for, reader, I am telling you a true story, one which doubtless has been enacted again and again, and will be to the end of time.

"And so you are going to Rossmoor?" It was Vandeleur who spoke. Their pleasant visit had come to an end, but both were anticipating a renewal of their agreeable intercourse before very long, for though Mrs. Greville was still undecided, she was a good deal swayed by his continual advice to her of taking a house in town, which he represented to her as by far the best thing for her. "I am glad you are going to Rossmoor at once, instead of returning to your Welsh hills, where I am sure you feed morbid feelings —the worst thing possible for you."

"You are wrong in that. I do not think I am morbid now, whatever I may have been. I have too many interests and occupations to yield to sickly fancies; but I do cling to

scenes of old associations more dearly than I quite knew, till now that I am separated from them. When those who were dearest have passed away, there is much that is consoling in being near the hallowed ground where they sleep;" Mrs. Greville bent her head forward on her hand as she spoke, to hide the emotion that past recollections had called forth.

Mr. Vandeleur saw it, and, in his newly-awakened feelings of tender friendship for her, was minded to comfort her with his brotherly affection; but thinking better of it, he turned his back to the fire, *à l'Anglaise*, seeking, even as a Delphic prophetess, inspiration from warmth — and besought her not to encourage such sad thoughts.

"What creed so cruel," he continued, "as that which bids us believe that even death can separate us from those we loved? Surely their spirits linger with us on earth. I love to think that those who were dear to me are still watching over me, longing and praying for my happiness with the same fervour that they felt when on earth."

How far Mr. Vandeleur's ministering angels

approved of his mode of being happy, is not recorded.

"It is a loving belief," replied Mrs. Greville, looking up, the tears still bedewing her dark lashes, "and to those who hold it, I can quite understand the consolation that it brings them."

"It does indeed," said Vandeleur, warmly, and somewhat carried away by his imagination, as was not unfrequently the case when he was enacting the part of consoler to a pretty woman, "it does indeed. I too have known sorrow. I have lost a mother I adored, and a very dear sister; but I never can believe that they are far from me. And since I have known you, I could almost believe that my own sweet sister Eveline—her name was the same as yours—had returned to me in life, so greatly do you remind me of her."

"Do I really?" said Mrs. Greville, touched at the pathos in his voice.

"And will you not be a sister to me?" said Vandeleur, sitting down on a low chair at her side, speaking in a voice he well knew how to modulate, "and let me be a brother to you, a

friend in whom you may trust — confide? You may indeed trust me."

"Of that I am sure," said Eveline, warmly, and holding out her hand with a gesture of confidence and kindly deprecation of the necessity of any such assurance on his part.

"Like you, I have neither brother nor sister," said Vandeleur.

"No, but you have your wife and children, ties still more sacred," replied Mrs. Greville.

"They should be; and my wife is a most admirable woman, as near perfection as a woman can be; but her father and mine settled the marriage when we were very young, and—there it is—nothing very romantic, you see."

"The bare facts of life are rarely romantic, I fancy," returned Eveline. "In a painting it is the soft *nuances*, the tender shades that lead the severe outline into the coolest grays, or the most glowing tints; so in our lives, is it not the inner workings of the heart, the hopes, the aspirations, the disappointments of which no one is cognisant but ourselves, that fill up *our* outline? The outline is patent to

all, but the shadows and lights are known only to ourselves."

"Your imaginative natures dwell more on the ideal than our harder ones," said Vandeleur, pleased at her simile; "it is that which lends such a charm to women and makes their sympathy so sweet to us. We men are made of sterner stuff."

"And yet I have sometimes thought that there is more real tenderness in man than in woman; at least, I have found it so," returned Mrs. Greville, musingly.

"Not unlikely," answered Vandeleur, with a smile, "but I did not mean that we were sterner of heart—only of imagination, living less in the ideal than ladies do."

"In other words, you are the workers and we the dreamers," said Eveline, archly.

"We have our dreams, too, and our wishes also, and mine at this moment is, to know when I shall see you again. Shall you be in town soon?"

"Not the slightest prospect; when I leave Rossmoor I go home," replied Eveline.

"Have all my arguments then failed? Do you return to your old morbid love of soli-

tude? I am sure that none of your friends will counsel so unwise and unkind a step," said Vandeleur, disappointed.

"I don't know that I have any friends who care sufficiently about me to counsel me one way or the other," was Eveline's answer.

"You do yourself and your friends injustice. What do you call these hospitable people here?"

Vandeleur liked playing the mentor to such a pretty woman.

"*Most* kind and hospitable," said Eveline, warmly; "and Pamela is my greatest friend; but when she is married, new ties and duties will occupy her, and we shall no longer be to each other what we have been. Do not think I speak bitterly; I simply state a fact."

"Do you think, then, that marriage precludes friendship?" asked the other, assiduously snipping up bits of cotton which he was measuring carefully off the reel.

"To a certain extent, yes," answered Eveline. "Certainly between women, though few would allow it. Perhaps we are more *exigéantes* than men. Now, you may not see your dearest friend for a year or more, and

you meet again as if nothing had happened—as if you had parted but yesterday. We can't do that."

"No. I am aware ladies have a great deal to talk about—their new bonnets, the last marriage, and so forth; and if a long silence occurs, the effort to get over the amount of talking lost in that interval must be immense," said he seriously.

"Don't be so absurd," said Eveline, laughing.

"Come, I have roused you from that very melancholy vein you were falling into. You said just now that you would allow me the privilege of being your friend, your brother; you will then trust to me, will you not? I only advise you for your good."

Eveline looked up, laughing, and answered in Rochefoucauld's words,—

"Nous ne trouvons guère de gens de bon sens que ceux qui sont de notre avis."

"A la bonne heure," replied the other. "You will think me sensible, then, for you are half wishing to come to London, I see that. Remember, nowhere will you hear such music as in——"

A sneeze, vainly smothered in a handkerchief, came from the window.

Both looked up.

"Deuce take her!" thought Vandeleur; "when did she come in?" But aloud he said, with perfect *sang-froid*, "Ah, I have been expecting that for the last half-hour, Miss Wilson. I knew you would catch cold. Windows are apt to be draughty in winter, and I wondered that you sat there so long. Mrs. Greville," he resumed, coolly, as though nothing had interrupted his conversation, "I see that the fine arts have a chance of inducing you to come out of your banishment; and though your friends must not flatter themselves that they have had any participation in the step, I hope that I, among the many, may benefit by it, and that you will allow me to introduce my wife to you."

Mrs. Greville expressed her pleasure, and Vandeleur, shaking hands with her, left the room, saying to Miss Wilson, as he passed her where she was sitting hidden by the curtain, "that he trusted her cold would not be serious," a benevolent hope scarce borne out by his feelings.

"I never saw you, Miss Wilson," said Eveline, going up to her. "Are you not cold out here?"

"No, I don't suppose you did see me. I never care to roast myself over the fire."

"Well, I confess I do," laughed Eveline. "As everybody is out hunting, I am going to practise. Shall we sing something together?"

No. Miss Wilson had letters to write, and was going to her own room. Not sorry to be quit of so morose a companion, Eveline left her. She found Lady Okehampton in the music-room.

"Shall I disturb you?" asked Eveline.

"Not the least, my dear. I have got my work in a terrible mess," she said, in a despairing voice.

"Let me see," said Eveline, sitting down on the foot-stool, "I am a great hand at unpicking;" and she took the worsted work, while Lady Okehampton sank back in her chair, saying,—

"I am quite tired trying to find out where I am wrong, and I am positively ashamed to trouble that good-natured Miss Wilson any more."

Eveline's dexterous fingers flew over the work while she chatted away to the other about the double wedding, asked about Miss Kinnaird's marriage, and listened with interest to the many little trifles that Lady Okehampton, like many others, loved to dilate on, but which rarely find a listener. However, Eveline was a good one, and so quickly passed the morning that both were surprised when the gong sounded for luncheon.

"How the time has flown! and what a quantity of work you have done, and never unpicked a stitch! Let us come to luncheon; we shall only have the children to-day, for I don't suppose any one has come in." And linking her arm in Eveline's, they went to the dining-room.

END OF VOL. I.

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